



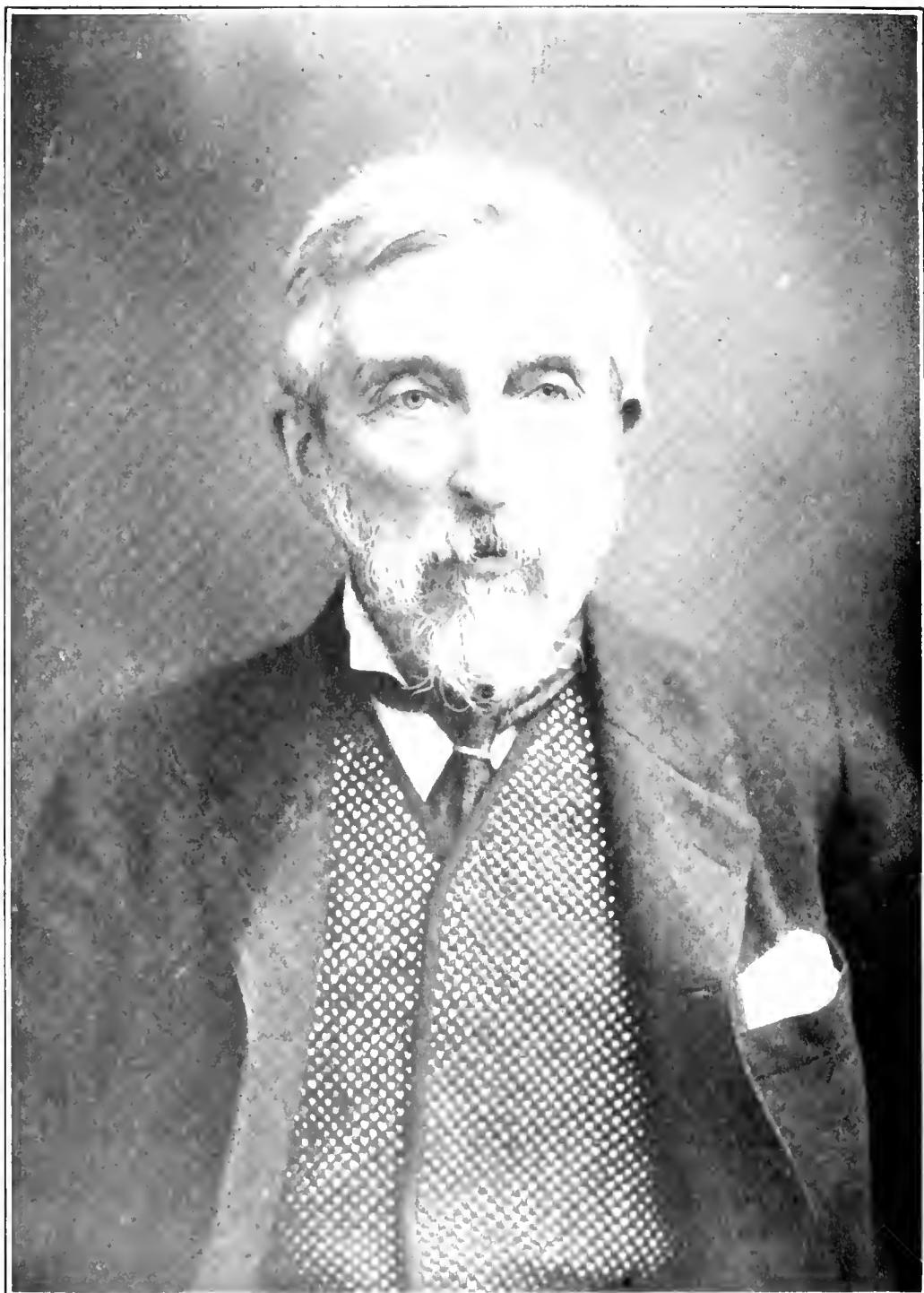
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Dear Dr. F. G. Bush Stead.

HOW
OLD AGE PENSIONS
BEGAN TO BE





The Right Honorable
CHARLES BOOTH,
Privy Councillor.

Printed by Russell & Sons.

HOW OLD AGE PENSIONS BEGAN TO BE

BY
FRANCIS HERBERT STEAD, M.A.

WARDEN OF BROWNING HALL AND HON. SECRETARY
TO THE NATIONAL PENSIONS COMMITTEE

“ —I report as I saw,
I report as a man may of God’s work.”

ROBERT BROWNING

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

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How Old Age Pensions Began to Be

CHAPTER I

“ SO MYSTIC ”

“ I view its consequences as so great, so mystic, so incalculable, so largely affecting the whole scope and fabric of our Empire itself, that I rank it as a measure far more vitally important than even the great Reform Bill.”

Two Eminent Witnesses.

That is the testimony of one who has been Prime Minister.

“ It is a new departure, reaching along an almost unmeasured road of future social progress.”

That is the testimony of one who is Prime Minister.

Both statesmen were speaking of the measure which by Royal Assent on August 1st became the Old Age Pensions Act, 1908.

There is a deeper witness than theirs. But even their words are sufficient to raise and press the inquiry :

How did this Act come to be?

The effect is admittedly momentous. What was the cause?

It is not enough to point to the machinery which ground the Bill into law. It is not enough to recite the majorities in Parliament, or the decisions of Cabinets. They, like the work of the Parliamentary draftsmen, or the formula of Royal Assent, have their place in the mechanics of legislation. But these do not supply the driving power.

The source of the force.

General Elections, too, like divisions in Parliament, only register the force which has been generated; they do not generate it.

The mainspring of this new departure, which is greater than the great Reform Act, and opens up an unmeasured

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prospect of social reform, lies far below all kinds of electoral apparatus.

It lies deep in the nation's heart.

What put it there?

The national purpose—that is the vital thing. To call that into being, to strip it of entanglements, to shape it, to concentrate it, to press it home to achievement—these are the real, the decisive, the creative processes. And mingled with them is “something far more deeply interfused,” which arouses the most fascinating and most entrancing interest of all.

“Mystic” Antecedents.

Not alone the “consequences,” but the antecedents also are “mystic.”

It is with these dynamic beginnings that I am here concerned. They form the main theme of my story.

It is a story that needs to be told. In many quarters the arrival of Old Age Pensions is a portent unexplained. They cannot understand it. It has not come the usual Party way. General Elections have been fought on other and lesser issues. This stupendous reform seems to them to have crept in unawares. Its real genesis must be told.

Aim and Limits of this work.

The motto from Browning which appears on the title page states at once the aim of my work and its limits.

“I report as I saw.” I give evidence of what I witnessed. I state what I have seen, heard, felt, handled, or otherwise experienced. I attempt no survey of the entire Pensions movement as it marches round the world. I limit myself to what has passed under my own ken. And if the limit imposes on the narrative more of a personal tone, be this forgiven me. Let me be regarded but as the sensitive tissue on which the rays have thrown their image, and which outlines the result in words, not shades. For I was in the thick of the things that I report.

Important as it may be to sweep together generalizations from such evidence as has found its way into print, it is more important to provide or procure the first-hand evidence without which the generalizer laboureth but in vain. And the importance deepens when the evidence touches on the mysterious Region which is the source of true initiative and the home of infinite force.

“As a man may.”

“I report as a man may of God’s work.” The report must be human; therefore marred by all manner of defects: defects of vision, defects of utterance; warpings of purpose and

straining of aim ; it must be only in snatches and with many a stammer. Even within its narrow range it must be subject to every kind of allowance for the “ personal equation.” But, because human, it ought to be humble and reverent, and touched with a devout shyness, yet driven by an unconquerable Impulse, while at the same time as simple and candid and trustful as a child. And the certainty of failure in these respects flings the reporter back on a deeper certainty still.

He can rely, “ as a man may,” on the Grace that forgives.

A.—THE DARKEST NIGHT AND THE DISTANT DAWN

CHAPTER II

THE TRAGEDY OF “WANT AND AGE”

The first public word I spoke on Old Age Pensions had a setting that proved to be a symbol of things to come.

In Leicester Workhouse.

It was in Leicester Workhouse. I was speaking to the inmates on a Sunday afternoon. Before me were the old folks, men and women both. The sight was one to move any heart to pity. I spoke to them from the first Beatitude: “Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.” I told them how the words were coming true: the poor were receiving their kingdom, outwardly now, as always inwardly. I talked of the better time at hand.

The country was then passing through the General Election of 1885, and a great deal was being said about Old Age Pensions. There were present at the service a Radical guardian and a Conservative guardian, both there to see that all went well. I knew that political sensibilities are easily stirred, but I felt it right to refer to the prospect of pensions for the worn-out workers, as illustrating some of the blessings which the Kingdom had in store.

Radical and Conservative agreed.

I was pleasantly surprised to hear afterwards that no one’s political teeth had been set on edge. Conservative Guardian agreed with Radical that the prospect had comforted the poor folks, and both were glad of it.

This little incident showed the hope which was stirring in the heart of the people, cheering the poor, and already uniting “good men of all parties.”

The hope naturally deepened in earnestness when I came to live in Walworth, as Warden of the Settlement that takes its name from Robert Browning. One of my earliest messages to the people was about the good time of civic security

that was approaching when old men and old women would no longer be imprisoned in workhouses, but should sit, as Zechariah had pictured, in the open spaces of a Garden City, each man leaning on his staff "for multitude of days." I soon found there was need of something much more tangible than pictures and hopes.

I did not know then that I had come to the very metropolis of aged poverty. I did not know then that Southwark had the largest proportion of aged pauperism to the population of any Poor Law Union in England and Wales. That I learned afterwards. But I did know the bitter facts of many an aged life. I knew men who had served the same firm for more than twenty years turned away at a week's notice, because they were "too old." I saw the effects of that stunning blow. I saw the almost frantic search for another job that could never be found. I saw the sickening of heart that sank into despair. Everywhere the same answer was given, couched in differing phrase, but always meaning, "You are too old to work."

I saw what came of them. In some cases they went to live with a poor son or daughter. They knew they were a heavy extra charge upon the meagre income of the narrow home. Yet there they had to stay, until the burden could be no longer borne, or unemployment came and there was "nothing coming in" either for child or for parent.

I saw the old men in desperation applying for charity. I knew the galling inquisition they went through. I knew the pitiless exposure to prying eyes of their life's nakedness. And I saw them, after this ordeal, refused the help they sought and almost thought they had obtained—refused because of some long-gone fault in early life.

I saw men past work persist in trying to work. I saw men who trembled for very age hawking trifles in the streets, and tottering on through mud and sleet and icy wind. I saw men slowly wither up, body and soul, under the blighting sense that they were wanted nowhere, and a burden everywhere.

When he is forsaken,
Withered and shaken,
What can an old man do but die?

Only those who have seen it can conceive the misery of the poor old fellow who finds that society has no longer any use for him, who feels he is done with and done for. Manly old men came to me, with tears running down their cheeks, imploring me as if I were Almighty God to have pity on them and get them work—"Anything, oh, anything, no matter what it is, to keep me from the workhouse!"

Where Aged
Poverty was
acutest.

Bitter
"Charity."

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They were not thriftless, drunken vagabonds. Far from it. Many of them were, and had always been, thoroughly respectable, sober, honest, thrifty, hard-working men and women, Godfearing too, who had brought up families in the same good way, but who in the end of life found themselves forlorn and destitute. To the burden of years, always hard enough to bear, was added the still more crushing burden of want and shame and social neglect.

Working of the Economic Standard.

I saw how generally the economic standard had thrust out the ethical from English life. The moment a man ceased to be of value as an economic tool, he was flung aside as altogether worthless. Age, far from being reverenced, was despised and rejected of men. In place of "that which should accompany old age—honour, love, obedience, troops of friends," was offered—Newington Workhouse, where old folks had to sit on benches without backs.

More dreaded than Hell.

I saw how my old neighbours dreaded that last resort. They loathed the gate of the workhouse, I fear, a great deal more than the gate of hell. It represented to their minds—not altogether justly, perhaps—"the weariest and most loathed life that age and ache and penury and imprisonment could lay on nature." High-hearted women driven into it by utter want of home and food, died of very shame. The degradation of it simply broke their heart.

Starvation preferred.

Other neighbours of mine, rather than enter the workhouse, deliberately endured and concealed the slow tortures of starvation. The truth came out after death, at an inquest possibly. Evidence showed that the deceased had repeatedly been pressed to go into "the House," but had invariably refused. The medical examination proved that he had been starved to death. The memory of certain aged deaths lies still like a burning blister on my soul.

A suburban friend, hearing some of these tragedies, exclaimed: "If I lived where you do, it would kill me; I could not stand it." But our feelings, of course, do not count compared with theirs.

The little we could do to relieve or comfort a few was nothing to what was needed. But there was hope that the nation would at last awake to a sense of its duty to its aged members. It was again and again a hope deferred; and the heart grew sick.

"The best Club in Europe."

Sometimes, when I thought of all those legislators sitting in their hall at Westminster, only two miles away from all this misery, and spending their time in talk on any or everything but the sorest needs of their country, my heart grew

hot within me. The words of the ancient prophet rose often to my lips :—

" Woe unto the shepherds that do feed themselves ! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep ? Ye eat the fat, ye clothe you with the wool ; ye kill the fatlings ; but ye feed not the sheep."

Our Governmental shepherds were not, however, wholly idle. A Royal Commission on the Aged Poor had reported in 1895. A Committee of experts was considering the possibilities of Old Age Pensions.

The hope still lingered that means would be found to relieve and remove this mass of aged misery.

CHAPTER III

THE REPORT OF DESPAIR

In the summer of 1898 the Committee on Old Age Pensions presented its report. It was, as has been said, a committee of experts, with Lord Rothschild in the chair.

It contained shock upon shock.

It gave an appalling estimate of the extent of aged poverty. It reckoned that the number of persons in the United Kingdom who were above the age of 65 years amounted, in round figures, to some two millions : of all this total two-thirds were computed to require aid. The exact words of the Committee were : " This total [of about two millions] also includes those possessed of means sufficient to sustain themselves independently of State aid in their old age. . . .

" It would perhaps be reasonable to assume that the number who would not require aid would be at least one-third of the total population above the age of 65 years."

In plain, plump English, the Committee's statement meant

TWO-THIRDS OF THE AGED ARE IN WANT.

Two-thirds of 2,000,000 works out at about 1,330,000. That is the figure upon which the Committee proceeded to base its further calculations.

1,330,000 old folks in want !

I had comforted myself with the thought that Southwark was exceptional ; the worst was surely clotted there, and had gathered around me. Aged poverty was, of course, present in other Unions ; but I was not prepared for the hugeness of the computed total.

I found that the cases which I had seen and which had cut me to the heart were but a sample of what was going on in more than a million lives. Each instance that had come under my notice I must multiply a million times if I would approach to a conception of the total mass of aged wretchedness.

Over a million old people were in want. Over a million old people were faced with the four dread choices : To be a burden on their relatives, who were mostly heavily burdened

to begin with : to be a burden on "charity," with its inquisitorial indignities and its galling patronage : to be a burden on the rates, with consequent disfranchisement and degradation : or simply to die of starvation. Be a burden they must, if they lived. Only by death could they cease to be burdensome. " Honour thy father and thy mother ! " O England ! wealthiest country on this side the globe, how hast thou honoured the fathers and mothers of thy people whose days have been long in the land ?

The grievance thus disclosed was simply colossal. What **Was there a Remedy ?** remedy had the Committee to suggest—this company of experts whom the nation had selected as its wisest counsellors ?

Here came the worst shock of all.

Remedy to suggest they had **NONE**.

Their own words are :—

" We have been forced to the conclusion that none of the schemes submitted to us would attain the objects which the Government had in view, and that we are ourselves unable, after repeated attempts, to devise any proposal free from grave inherent disadvantages." These picked advisers of the nation declared that they could neither discover nor devise any scheme to meet the need.

There was a man of the name of Charles Booth—

Oh, yes ! But the Committee would not even consider his scheme, found it incompatible with the terms of the reference, excluded it therefore summarily.

NO remedy !

Worse followed.

The negative findings of the Committee were to all appearances acquiesced in by the responsible leaders of the nation. There was no sound of dissent in authoritative circles. There was no whisper of brushing aside the doleful " conclusions," or of reopening the question.

The feeling then prevalent in the repositories of power was pretty accurately expressed to me some months later by one who stood very near to the then Prime Minister : " The men who have made long and careful study of the question," he said to me, " have reluctantly come to the conclusion that nothing can be done. If any practicable proposal could have been advanced, they would have advanced it. It is a great and complicated problem. And if those who have studied it with every wish to help the aged poor cannot suggest any solution, how can the rest of us, who are, to say the least, not experts, undertake to do anything ? "

Paralysis of Leadership.

I took it at the time, and later events confirmed the impression, that the students of the question referred to included not merely the experts of the Committee but also a member of the Cabinet, whose name was often associated with Pensions, who said later that he had given days and nights to the study of the question.

Still, therefore, no remedy !

Think of what that meant to us : to our poor neighbours in Walworth : to the million and more scattered over the country of the indigent aged.

It sounded a knell of despair.

But GOD was not dead.

CHAPTER IV

A SECRET FIGHT WITH FORCE UNSEEN

How long the gloom which Lord Rothschild's Committee had shed would have hung over the lot of the aged, had the Mother Country been left to her own devices, Heaven only knows.

Happily, we have Colonies.

Their most imperial contributions have been, not contingents to help us in the perils of war, but social experiments to guide us in the problems of peace.

The first ray of light that split the cloud of negative conclusions came from New Zealand.

The Report of Despair was issued about midsummer. In the autumn of the same year came the antidote. "Thunderless lightnings" brought the glad news that what the Home Country could not find out how to do, her most progressive Colony was boldly purposing to do.

New Zealand was passing through its various stages an Old Age Pensions Bill—and one which was to give 7s. a week to every needy and worthy applicant over 65 years of age !

*The first
gleam of
dawn.*

*What New
Zealand dared
to do.*

I was privileged to know the Agent-General of the Colony, formerly its Minister of Labour, author of its Industrial Arbitration Act, and one of its most fonsal souls. The Hon. William Pember Reeves had already spoken at Browning Hall (the meeting-place of the Settlement) on four different occasions. As soon as I saw the cablegrams from New Zealand, I asked Mr. Reeves to come down and expound the new measure to the men of Walworth. Such a dawn of hope must be diffused as quickly and as widely as possible. Mr. Reeves replied that until the Bill became an Act it was still in the region of controversial politics, and as official representative he could not treat of it before it was finally enacted.

The enactment followed in due course. I reminded Mr. Reeves of his promise, and he arranged to come to Browning Hall on Sunday afternoon, November 20th, 1898. Bills were posted and leaflets were circulated announcing the fixture.

**Laying bare
the soul.**

Then came to me a strange inward experience. It is hard to describe. Many would think that it ought not to be described. The habit of reticence about the innermost life is instinctive with most Englishmen. They have no objection to talking of physical health. But a word about what is at once highest and deepest within us, they put down as extremely bad taste. I fear that some who are keenly interested in the story of the progress of Pensions will regard what I have now to say as an unfortunate intrusion of self, as an exposure of the soul which is scarcely delicate, or even decent. I must just take the risk of such criticism. My duty leaves me no option. I may not hide even the inmost processes that are bound up with the overt and momentous sequel. It is part of the witness I have to bear.

The week before Mr. Reeves's visit I lived in the inner world. I was indisputably active in the ordinary work of the Settlement. The winter programme was then in full tide. We were, besides, just launching a scheme for building Tavern and Clubhouse at a cost of £4,000 or £5,000. There was more than the usual whirl of intense and crowded activity. But the work of the week to me was—prayer. It filled the interstices of each day's duties. It filled the waking moments of the night.

**A battle in
the dark.**

When the week began, and the coming Sunday afternoon claimed attention in prayer, there rose up within me a consciousness which can only be hinted at in terms of the senses. A great darkness seemed to settle down on the soul and threatened to envelop it wholly. This I felt I must not let it do. It was a huge foreboding of ill which chilled me, but which I felt I must strive with all my might—and more than all my might—to vanquish. As I recall it now, the deepest impression left was that of Opposing Force. And against it I had to struggle with every force of will that I possessed, or could command, or could implore.

What it portended, I could not tell. The two certainties were that it was *there*, and that it related to the next Sunday's meeting. All else was conjecture, and to no conjecture was the stamp of certitude affixed. I was naturally and intensely alarmed. Such challenge to all the resources of the soul had only come to me before great turning points in my own life or in other lives closely entwined with mine. What was the crisis impending now?

**"The spectres
of the mind."**

My fears ran in the direction of supposing that harm might accrue to the Settlement from the anticipated meeting. The idea seems ridiculous now, when the broad freedom of the Kingdom of God has wellnigh everywhere been conceded to

the P.S.A. platform. But then it was not unchallenged. And the suggestion was ready that some good friends, whose zeal was great but not according to knowledge, might make what they would call the secular nature of the forthcoming address the occasion of a "dead set" against the Settlement. The surmise was of no consequence : it was purely subjective : it was never certified within or verified without. I only mention it out of candour, to show how entirely in the dark I was as to the meaning of this strange conflict.

Of the reality of the force I had to meet, I could have no manner of doubt. I knew it, as I know any force, by the amount of countervailing force required to check it. It took the whole of me, and more than me, to stand against it. Is not resistance a measure of reality ? The pressure demanded is proof of the opposing pressure ; and when the entire personality was strained to the utmost to oppose, only flippancy could suggest there was nothing there to be opposed.

There I was, all the week long, battling in the darkness : only able to hold my own by help from above continually implored and continually bestowed. I felt the need of being ever on the alert, lest by slip of hand or foot I should be overthrown. And there kept running through my mind the sense of the words of Charlotte Elliott :—

Watch as if on thee alone
Hung the issue of the fray.

I had the vague feeling that much, very much, for others depended on the outcome of my struggle.

Not till Sunday morning did the battle cease. Then was given me the certainty of victory. I *knew* that all would go well.

The Opposing Reality.

The pledge of victory.

What forces had been overcome, I knew not. Eleven years have passed since then, and I can still give no clear explanation or sure analysis of the force I had to meet. Of the Force that played through me, of the Force by which I overcame, I had no doubt : nor could have ; the intimacy graciously vouchsafed through the course of a lifetime could not be mistaken. HE gave me the victory.

How much was involved in that victory, how far it was to extend, I had then no idea. Subsequent events were to unfurl its significance. But before I report what the victorious Power wrought on the open plain of public life, I must make grateful confession of His working in the recesses of one human consciousness.

Of the more distant consequences, however, I had no dream that Sunday morning when the encounter was over. My only thought was of the afternoon meeting, and of the glad assurance that had been given me about it.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW ZEALAND ACT AT THE HEART OF EMPIRE

**With band
and placard
at the fair.**

The first item in the day's programme was to rouse Walworth to a sense of the importance of the meeting and of the news from New Zealand. On Sunday mornings Walworth concentrates in the open air market which then fills East Street for about a quarter of a mile. To this Sunday market, accordingly, we proceeded with our brass and reed band, displaying placards and distributing handbills.

We had often been in East Street before on summer Sundays, and had gathered goodly crowds about us. But never before had we created so great a sensation. When the people saw the announcement—

OLD AGE PENSIONS :
SEVEN SHILLINGS A WEEK
AFTER 65 YEARS OF AGE.
HOW NEW ZEALAND DOES IT
will be explained by the
HON. W. P. REEVES,
Agent-General for New Zealand
and formerly Minister of Labour,
at
ROBERT BROWNING HALL,
York Street, Walworth, S.E.,
on
Sunday, Nov. 20th, at 3.30 p.m.,—

A portent.

the effect was electric. Bird-fanciers, sporting tipsters, vendors of quack medicines, and the numerous other attractions of the fair were neglected. The people rushed to our "pitch" and crowded round with immense eagerness to hear about the great new Deed of Hope. I was amazed.

Here indeed was potency of popular force of incalculable political consequence ! What touched such a throng to the quick would, I felt sure, before long rouse the nation, if only

statesmen could be found who knew their opportunity. About me surged the groundswell of the coming change.

The meeting at Browning Hall may fairly claim to be historic. A memorable occasion.

The hall—in the midmost division of the capital of Empire, and in the metropolis of aged poverty.

The subject—the first Old Age Pensions Act ever passed in the British Empire.

The speaker—the official representative in the seat of Empire of the enacting Colony.

The meeting—the first in the Imperial capital at which the Act was to be expounded.

And the auspices—entirely religious.

Rarely has there been a more significant conjunction of circumstances.

Mr. Reeves had before him some four hundred typical working men. He had beside him on the platform leaders of British labour, the venerable Secretary of the "Liberal Forwards," and two representatives of American universities.

One letter was read which may be cited for its later significance:—

"It would have given me great pleasure to come to your Settlement on Sunday and hear Mr. W. P. Reeves, but I am sorry to say I shall be out of town. Thanking you for giving me the chance, I am, yours faithfully, CHARLES BOOTH."

Mr. Reeves's address was a lucid, vivid and tempting exposition of the Act. It was followed with the keenest interest and the most demonstrative sympathy. The proceedings were opened and closed with singing and prayer, and there was an unmistakable ring of religious enthusiasm both in the tone of the speakers and in the response of the hearers. The Act was claimed from the first as an endeavour to express the social providence of the Christ as it works through the conscience of the democracy. Awe and joy mingled in the sense of the new hope that had dawned for the aged poor.

As the meeting dissolved, I was more than satisfied. The assurance of the morning had been amply fulfilled. There had been no jar or hitch in the proceedings. The spirit had been admirable. The great Colonial precedent had been suitably set forth; our men had been instructed and stimulated. Next morning the newspapers would repeat the effect on the world at large, public opinion would be roused, popular hope would stir. My heart was filled with gladness and gratitude.

The new Law expounded.

The inward pledge fulfilled.

A voice from the ranks.

That, I thought, was the end of the matter.
But it was not.

In the evening, a member of our P.S.A. Brotherhood came to me—Mr. A. E. Ball, afterwards a councillor of the Borough of Southwark. He said: “Some of us have been talking over the meeting this afternoon. We hope you are not going to allow all this enthusiasm to evaporate without doing something.”

I asked him what he thought could be done.

“Could you not call a Conference to consider whether something could be attempted for our old people like what has been done in New Zealand?”

I thought awhile, and then answered: “Well, Mr. Charles Booth wrote in a very friendly way, as you heard this afternoon. He is the man, if we could induce him to come. Then we might have a Conference that would be worth considering. I might write and ask him.”

I felt that the desire of the men for further action ought to be respected, and therefore acted upon.

So slender was the filament along which ran the current of Initiative.

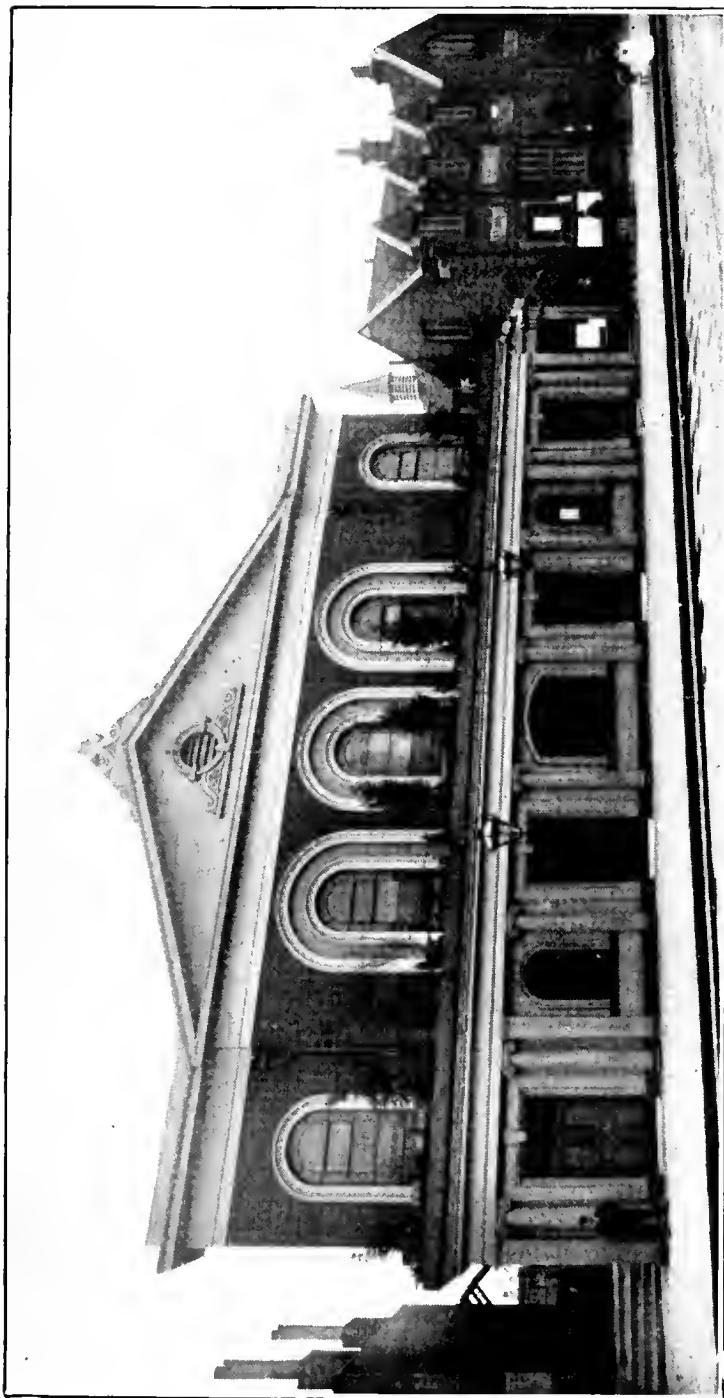
Before approaching Mr. Booth I went round to the offices of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, then in Stamford Street, and consulted my friend Mr. George Barnes. I had come to know him during the Eight Hours struggle of the previous year: and was glad to find that he had made more friends by defeat than most men make by victory. As the principal Labour leader in our immediate neighbourhood, he could advise better than any other as to the outlook and prospect of the suggested Conference.

He entirely approved the idea, and promised his hearty co-operation—a promise nobly fulfilled, as the sequel will show.

So I wrote to Mr. Booth.

The fonsal Person.

As this was another link in the chain which destiny was forging, I ought to explain that I had never even seen that eminent man. I had, it is hardly necessary to say, long admired him from a distance as the foremost of living sociologists, as the founder of the modern Science of Cities, who had with splendid audacity selected for his task of investigation and description the greatest city in the world, whose resulting book on the Life and Labour of the People in London had become the classic of civic study all the world over, and who had yet contrived, amid these immense labours, while also active director of a great shipping firm, to make the question of Old Age Pensions peculiarly his



Clayton Hall.

B R O W N I N G H A L L.

own. But would he consent to come to a Walworth conference?

Glad was I to know he would. In the letter dated 24, Great Cumberland Place, November 23rd, 1898, he wrote: "I think I can promise to come to you on the evening of Tuesday, December 13th: and I should suggest an invited meeting as more likely to be fruitful than a public one. But I do beg you will not make too much of me in the matter, though I shall be very glad to join in discussing the subject." The last sentence is characteristic.

The choice of date was an interesting coincidence. It was the day after the eighth anniversary of Robert Browning's death. It was the exact anniversary of the day four years previously when a small company of friends met in quiet prayer to commence the Robert Browning Settlement. I need hardly add, the coincidence was neither designed by Mr. Booth nor intended by me.

For this doubly significant date the Conference was arranged. It was under the auspices of the Public Questions Committee of our P.S.A. Brotherhood. It was primarily intended to be a local Conference for the education of local opinion, and for the instruction of our men. This was the circular of invitation:—

BROWNING SETTLEMENT,
82, CAMBERWELL ROAD, S.E.
December 3rd, 1898.

CONFERENCE ON OLD AGE PENSIONS.

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Charles Booth has kindly consented to meet representatives of Trade Unions and Friendly Societies at the Robert Browning Hall, York Street, Walworth Road, S.E., on Tuesday evening, December 13th, 1898, for conference (not of a public character) on the subject of "Old Age Pensions."

I have pleasure in inviting you or another friend representing your Society to meet Mr. Booth.

A reply would oblige, yours faithfully,

F. HERBERT STEAD, *Warden.*

Tea and Coffee at 7.30 p.m.

Conference at 8 p.m.

I had expected the Conference to be a purely local one. But a great surprise awaited me.

A hundred circulars were printed. Having sent out all the local invitations, I had a few copies to spare. It struck me I might send them to Labour friends in different parts of the

A double coincidence.

18 HOW OLD AGE PENSIONS BEGAN TO BE

An
Astonishing
Result.

country—just to let them know what we were doing in the matter. They were sent out accordingly, for purposes of information, I repeat, and not for purposes of invitation. I lay stress on this point.

To my intense astonishment, acceptances came in from Bristol, Leicester, Hull, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle. And not from unofficial, irresponsible persons, but from secretaries and other chosen officials of some of the largest national Unions.

The casual despatch of these few spare circulars was the means of transforming the meeting from a local to a national Conference, and that, too, one of unusual weight. That result had not been contemplated by any human mind. Mr. Booth shared my surprise and pleasure.

On the Sunday before the Conference I spoke to the men of the P.S.A. about its enlarged importance, and asked all of them who believed in prayer to pray that it might be guided and blessed of God.

So encompassed by an atmosphere of prayer, the first Conference came into being.

B.—SEVEN CONFERENCES AT STRATEGIC CENTRES

CHAPTER VI A CONFERENCE OF SURPRISES

The evening of the 13th was cold and dark and misty. But its cheerlessness did not keep away the distant visitors. The list of those present is given below. All told they did not number forty. But they represented more than a quarter of a million of Trade Unionists—the very flower of British Labour. And, as will be seen, they stood for the most diverse parties and schools and grades.

Quarter of a million represented.

I ought here to recall that in 1898 the British Labour world was in a most unhappy state of division and reciprocal antagonism. An International Labour Congress which had been held in London during the previous July had turned into something perilously like a bear-garden, and was finally broken up in disorder.* And British Labour has shared in

* An incident of this International Congress may here be noted. It had invited men of all schools and parties and churches to unite in a Peace Demonstration in Hyde Park. Eager to promote international accord in this matter, I helped to organize a local committee, and spoke at several working men's meetings in London, urging them to demonstrate. Just two days before the demonstration, the central committee which had invited all varieties of opinion to join, issued resolutions of such a character that none but extreme Socialists could conscientiously vote for them. I was naturally disgusted at this breach of faith, and expressed my disgust in the leading London newspapers. It was then too late to change arrangements, so I advised all to march to the Park, and so declare in favour of the principle of peace, but to leave before the resolution was put. As it happened, the elements favoured this arrangement. For no sooner had the demonstration reached the Park than a thunderstorm burst in full fury and with torrents of rain. The crowd was at once soaked—and scattered. My outspoken letters had, however, given no small offence : and I was told that I had shut myself for ever out of the Labour movement ! At the very time I received this solemn assurance, I had letters in my pocket from Labour leaders thanking me for voicing the protest they felt but could not well express. And the close of the year, as reported above, put the prediction of my permanent exclusion in a yet more humorous light.

A new and unexpected synthesis.

the general disintegration. It was all at sixes and sevens.

But now our little Clayton Hall held representatives of all these warring sections. They were all together, and all at peace. The old Unionism was there, and the new. Socialism was there, and Individualism. Conservative and Liberal and Radical were all present. Women's unions, as well as the predominant male groups, were represented.

This juxtaposition of opposites naturally caused no small amazement. "What!" said M. to me, "B. here? I am surprised!" I went over to B. and immediately he exclaimed: "What! M. here? I never thought *he* would have come!" And so the ripple of astonishment went round,—with the coffee and tea and cake.

To bring those who have been aloof into touch with each other is always an agreeable, if often a delicate, task, and it was good for once to see an epitome of the British Labour world at one. In fact, when I returned from a visit to the other hall, where my colleague was holding a Shakespeare recital, and saw through the side door the whole Conference sitting together, I said to myself, "Behold the long desired Labour Party of the future."*

A startling letter.

Perhaps the most striking illustration of the new synthesis was given in one of the letters I read. Everyone knew the resolute separateness of the Northumberland miners. Everyone knew how steadfastly they had held aloof from Collectivist movements. Almost equally well known was the rugged and redhot Individualism of Ralph Young, their Secretary. And this was the letter I read, written by Mr. Young on behalf of the Northumberland Miners' Executive:—

"It was resolved that I should inform you that they unanimously approved of the object of the Conference. I was further directed to state that there was considerable difference of opinion on the Board previous to the passing of the Workmen's Compensation Act in respect of the principle of State pensions. Now, however, that this Act has been passed and large numbers of aged men and others not aged who are physically weak or have any natural defect about them are being discharged, and as the dismissals of these classes of cases will be enormously increased as soon as the inevitable reaction to the present boom in trade sets in, it becomes the imperative duty of the State which has been the cause of their dismissal to make provision to prevent them from starving. Unless these men are provided for—not only the aged poor, but the weak and infirm as well, who are being

* This was a true prophecy, as will be indicated later.

deprived of earning their living through the Compensation Act—the Government will be guilty of legal murder."

I rarely read a letter which made a greater sensation. It was seen to mark a seismic change of public opinion : a sort of social landslide.

But the great fact of the evening was the presence of Charles Booth. He was the central magnet that drew the scattered social particles towards unity. His address welded them into one. **The uniting factor.**

He began by generously declaring that the attendance of so many representative men from so many different parts of the country was one of the greatest honours which had ever been conferred upon him. And then he proceeded with his masterly array of arguments. They will be given later, and their style and presentation and effect will then be described.

Suffice it to say that, watching the meeting as I did from the chair, I felt it growing into agreement: and in the discussion which followed I saw plainly that the Conference was arriving at complete unity of purpose. The original idea was that, being a Conference, the meeting should not proceed to resolutions of any kind. But I ventured to formulate point after point on which I saw there was agreement. Finally, with the consent of everyone, I put the whole series to the meeting, which passed them with absolute unanimity !

There has been so much effective agreement since, in the country and in Parliament, that the present-day reader may find it hard to understand the intense surprise with which the Conference found itself entirely unanimous. The wonder our guests first felt at finding themselves in the one room was as nothing to the wonder they now felt at the discovery that they were all resolutely bent on one great project of reform. They experienced something of the amazement which may be supposed to have come over early Church Councils when, as they believed, a Divine afflatus suddenly swept all their differences into perfect accord. For here were all the warring sections of the Labour world: but they were no longer warring : they were on one great question of one mind and one heart. What made the wonder greater was that agreement had been reached, not by whittling down differences to some slender and insignificant point. Rather had all sections been levelled up to the plane of a simply colossal demand.

Nor was there mere unity of opinion. There was a fervid and practical unity of purpose.

Then arose the question :—

The unanimity which had so surprised and stirred them

The wonder of unanimity.

A new step mooted.

here, why should it not be repeated on a greater scale, and with definite practical consequences?

Councillor Holmes, of Leicester, was the first to propose that similar Conferences should be held in other industrial centres. Mr. Wilkie spoke strongly to the same effect. Both insisted that Browning Settlement should undertake the work of organization. And the Conference supported their suggestions.

Who was to initiate?

As the proceedings continued till a late hour, refreshments were served again at the close: and again Mr. Holmes and Mr. Wilkie tackled me, pressing on me to initiate Conferences elsewhere.

I said to Mr. Wilkie: "Why in the world should I take on this extra work? I have surely enough to attend to in Walworth, and in the projected extension of the Settlement now before us. Why don't you undertake it yourself? You are the secretary of a National Union, with a network of organization all over the land. All the ways lie open before you."

The reply came prompt: "If I were to take up the job, people would say, 'Hullo! What's Wilkie after now? Does he want to get into Parliament? Be sure he's some axe of his own to grind.' But," added Mr. Wilkie, "no one will ever say *you* have an axe to grind."

I accepted, with such grace as I could, this compliment to the general disinterestedness of Settlements, but pointed out that the essential thing was to secure, not the organizing person, but the presence of Mr. Booth.

Would Mr. Booth consent?

I was asked to urge the request of the Conference on him. He was then talking with a friend in another part of the room. At first I found him quite unwilling to accede. The completion of his book on London Life was weighing on him, he said. With his other duties, it precluded any idea of a series of Conferences. I went back to the men with my negative report. But they would take no refusal. "Only a few nights," they said; "ask only a few, if he cannot spare many."

I went back to Mr. Booth and formulated a definite proposal: "If we could arrange a Conference at Newcastle for the organized Labour of Northumberland and Durham, at Leeds for Yorkshire, at Manchester for Lancashire, and at Birmingham for the Midlands, would you not go to these? Only four nights out of the whole winter? And," I added, "if you went, judging by what we have seen to-night, you would return to London with the whole country at your back."

‘ The chief’s eye flashed ’; then softened : in the end he **His Answer.** promised to consider and reply later.

In the event of a favourable answer arriving, I was entrusted with further arrangements. The Conference dissolved in high hope and resolute mood.

Next day Mr. Booth wrote :—

“ I have thought over your proposal, and if meetings like that so successfully held last night under your auspices can be arranged at the four centres spoken of, I shall be very glad to attend and do my best to interest the audiences in my argument as to the provision of Old Age Pensions by the State.

“ It would be understood that the meetings are to be private, by invitation, of representative working class leaders, and without reporters. The time has not yet come for public meetings on this subject.”

So turn by turn had gone on the unrolling of the **What no man had expected.**

No man had expected the local Conference to become a national one.

No man had expected all sections of the Labour world to meet in one room in furtherance of one movement.

No man had expected that diverse gathering to arrive at unanimity on any project of this magnitude.

No man had expected this Conference to lead to other Conferences in different parts of the land.

None of us designed or arranged all this beforehand.

Who did?

To that question only one answer is possible.

**The
Fellowship of
Followers.**

The next night at the Settlement, in the study of the Characteristics of Jesus, our subject was "His Effluent Force"; after which was held the monthly meeting of the Fellowship of Followers.

This Fellowship must now be introduced to the reader. It is as little *seen* in the movements that radiate from the Settlement, and even in some parts of the Settlement itself, as the great dynamo is seen in the town which it illuminates and supplies with electric power. It is a company of men and women, young men and maidens, mostly drawn from the humblest ranks of society, who have subscribed a roll at the head of which stand the words, "Jesus said, If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. Meaning so to follow Him, we desire to be enrolled in the Fellowship of Followers."

**Pan-denom-
inational.**

Inscribing one's name in this roll in the presence of the Fellowship is the only form of confession and initiation required. The first to express a wish to sign was a Roman Catholic. The list of members includes Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers and persons of no ecclesiastical connection. A Church lays claim to be fellowship and government in one. The Fellowship lays no claim to government, and so compromises no denominational loyalty. It is the true expression of the pan-denominational life of the Settlement. In some respects it offers in the religious sphere a suggestive counterpart to what our Conferences are in the civic sphere. Often at that time a mere handful of earnest souls, it was, as it is, the very heart of the Settlement.

**A concert of
Prayer.**

To the prayers of this Fellowship the social movements which have become the special care of the Settlement are from time to time commended. The Pensions movement, as it was now being reopened amongst us, was from the first laid upon the intercessory conscience of the Fellowship. At

each meeting of the Fellowship during this winter I used to report, "A Conference on Old Age Pensions is to be held at such a place on such a date, and I ask the Fellowship to pray every day and especially on that day that the Conference may be guided aright and arrive at complete unity of purpose." At the Men's Meeting preceding each Conference, I made the same request.

The Fellowship has proved to us in the most personal and intimate way that distance has practically no existence for souls that are embosomed in the One Life: and the proof has been clearest in what we call help-seeking thought. Often and often, during these and other Conferences, in peculiarly anxious moments I have felt come billowing around me the prayer force of the Fellowship; and from that instant perilous differences have disappeared; unity has emerged; and in the end entire unanimity has reigned.

Distance vanquished.

The report of these results of concentrated prayer naturally deepened the concentration. With thanks and with boldness and with awe we pressed for further answers: and received them.

Prayer, and concerted prayer, have been the most effective weapons in the whole armoury of our agitation. The rest are swords and bayonets; prayer is the magazine rifle.

The best social dynamic.

I speak that I do know.

I have had some experience of social engineering. I ought to be able to estimate the relative magnitude of social and political forces, and to form some conception of their respective effectiveness. In the complex social machinery around me, I have pulled lever after lever, and noted the results. I have pulled the lever of prayer; and I have found the most remarkable results of all. I have seen, too, that all the other results are then deepened and combined into a completer efficiency.

This is no fancy of cloistered meditation. It is a simple statement of fact, as found in public meeting and private interview, in lobby and newspaper office, in Labour Conference and Parliamentary debate, as also in all the swirl of up-to-date agitation and electioneering.

As an engineer I make report on the social dynamic available.

"I report as a man may of God's work."

CHAPTER VIII

SENDING ROUND THE FIERY CROSS

The Mandate clear.

The directing Purpose had now begun to declare Itself. It was bent not merely on an effective Sunday afternoon, or on a local Conference, or on one national Conference. It was manifestly developing something much larger and more far-reaching.

We were not now stumbling on from step to step in the darkness. We could see a bit of the path marked out before us. There were Conferences to organize at the four greatest centres of English provincial life. So much was clear.

The Mandate which was involved for me I could only accept with reverence and joy and a rush of new energy.

I was beginning to understand now——.

And one's ordinary mundane faculties could now be turned to account. The Initiative once received, it was comparatively easy to descend to the executive details.

The men to act as Conveners.

The first thing was to secure as Convener of each local Conference someone on the spot.

No one commanded the mind of Labour in Northumberland and Durham like my good old friend, the universally respected Mr. Thomas Burt. He kindly agreed to act as Chairman, and Mr. Wilkie similarly accepted the office of Convener. So the Newcastle Conference was in safe hands. Mr. Connellan, who was present on the 13th, and was in touch with all the Trades Councils of Yorkshire, stood sponsor for the Leeds Conference. Mr. Chandler, who had come up from Manchester, and to whom I had naturally first turned, recommended Mr. G. D. Kelley, secretary to the Yorkshire Federation of Trades Councils, and Mr. Kelley consented to organize the Manchester meeting. In the Midlands there was no more universally recognized leader of Labour in all good movements than Mr. George Cadbury. The reluctance of a busy man to add to his responsibilities was at last overcome. Mr. Cadbury, whose sympathies were with us from the first, agreed to "arrange" for the convening

of the Birmingham meeting. So by the end of the year all four Conferences were in train.

Publicity of the ordinary kind we had agreed to avoid, but as it was our intention to saturate the mind of organized Labour with our project, printed matter of some kind was necessary. Accordingly we printed the following confidential statement of proceedings at the first Conference. By the request and aid of its members, some 3,000 copies were distributed among branches of their Unions throughout the country.

The convening statement.

CONFIDENTIAL.

BROWNING SETTLEMENT,
82, CAMBERWELL ROAD, S.E.
December 30th, 1898.

CONFERENCE ON OLD AGE PENSIONS.

DEAR SIR,—A Conference on Old Age Pensions was held in Robert Browning Hall, Walworth, South London, on Tuesday evening, December 13th, when leading representatives of **Trade Unions numbering over a quarter of a million members** came, at the invitation of the Settlement, to confer with **Mr. Charles Booth**.

The following list contains the names of most of those present, and of the societies they represented:—

UNION	REPRESENTATIVE.	MEMBERS.
Engineers, Amalgamated Society of ...	Geo. N. Barnes, Sec. ... James Kidd Benj. Wright	85,000
Carpenters and Joiners, Amalgamated Society of	F. Chandler, J.P., Sec. ...	57,000
Gas Workers and General Labourers, National Union of	J. Sansom Councillor Holmes, Sec. ...	42,000 20,000
National Hosiery and Dyers Federation ...	J. Maddison, Sec. ...	17,269
Iron Founders, Friendly Society of ... (England, Ireland, and Wales)	S. Masterson	
Associated Shipwrights' Society ...	A. Wilkie, Sec. ...	15,084
Operative Plasterers, National Association of	John Lamb E. T. Mendell	11,430 6,850
London Cabdrivers' Trade Union ...	W. Stevenson, Sec. ...	6,550
United Builders Labourers' Union ...	James Macpherson, Sec. ...	2,750
Shop Assistants, National Union of ...	Margaret G. Bondfield	
Workers' Union	T. Chambers, Sec. ...	2,381
Clerks, National Union of	A. J. Collett	
Women Workers, National Union of ...	Emily Janes, Sec.	
Smiths' and Fitters' Union ...	F. W. Newman	
Alliance and Furnishing Trade Assn. ... (West End No. 2)	D. Evans	

TOTAL MEMBERS OF TRADE UNIONS
of which numbers are given. } 266,314

TRADES COUNCIL.	REPRESENTATIVE.	MEMBERS.
London Trades Council ...	... James Macdonald, <i>Sec.</i> ...	52,134
Bristol Trades Council ...	... F. Sheppard... ...	30,000
Hull Trades Council ...	... Councillor Millington, <i>Pres.</i>	15,000
Leeds and District Trades Council	... Councillor O. Connellan, <i>Sec.</i>	13,500
	TOTAL TRADES COUNCILS	110,634
	Charles Booth, D.Sc.	
	Fredk. Maddison, M.P.	
	Will Crooks, I.C.C.	
	G. W. Richards, M.D., M.R.C.S.	
	Tom Bryan, M.A.	
	F. Butler	
	T. Holding	
	W. Wotman.	
	Henrietta Jastrow, Berlin.	
	F. Herbert Stead, M.A., <i>Chairman.</i>	

Mr. Thos. Burt, M.P., and Mr. John Burns, M.P., wrote regretting their unavoidable absence. The Executive of the Northumberland Miners' Mutual Confident Association, by their Secretary, Mr. R. Young, wrote that they unanimously approved of the object of the Conference, their former difference of opinion on the subject having been removed by the effects of the new Workmen's Compensation Act.

Mr. Booth first explained the principles on which any satisfactory system of Old Age Pensions must, in his judgment, be based. The most essential were (1) that all old persons should be entitled to benefit, and (2) that all should, through taxation, contribute to the cost. He then dealt with objections to his proposals, and answered questions. A general discussion ensued, in which Mr. G. N. Barnes, Miss Bondfield, Mr. Connellan, Mr. Crooks, Mr. F. Maddison, Mr. Macpherson, Mr. Masterson, Mr. Wilkie, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Collett, Mr. Holmes, Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Lamb, Mr. Macdonald, and others took part.

The proceedings were marked with great unanimity. The Conference gave its general and hearty support to the principles set forth by Mr. Booth.

It unanimously approved the idea of a universal and non-contributory system of Old Age Pensions. This, it was pointed out, would not involve any governmental interference with Trade Unions or supervision of them.

All contributory schemes were held to be incomplete and unsatisfactory. They would not, it was maintained, cover the most necessitous cases, and they would tend to take away the independence of Trade Unions.

The financial question was pronounced to be a question apart. The Conference held that the necessary funds should

be derived, not from any special taxation, but from the general sources of national revenue. It held, too, that the nation was well able to afford the amount required.

It was strongly of opinion that the suggested system of universal Pensions would prove not a deterrent, but an incentive to thrift, and that Trade Unions and other thrift societies would be thereby benefited. The receiving of such a Pension was felt to involve no loss of self-respect.

There was a general and an emphatic expression of opinion in favour of 60 as the age at which the payment of Pensions would most justly begin. With this view Mr. Booth did not agree.

The suggestion was advanced and well received that members of the Conference should endeavour to promote similar meetings in their respective unions, councils, or neighbourhoods. Mr. Booth kindly promised to consider the request that he would meet gatherings of representatives of Trade Unions, Friendly Societies and Co-operative Societies in a few of the chief provincial centres of industry.

It is suggested that such Conferences might in each case form an Old Age Pensions Committee to promote discussion of the question and to put itself into communication—for convenience' sake through the undersigned—with the Browning Hall Conference, the members of which may be regarded as a provisional central committee.

It is especially desired that no publicity be given to these proceedings.

I am, yours faithfully,

F. HERBERT STEAD, *Warden.*

CHAPTER IX

THE CONVINCING AND CONVERTING “ARGUMENT”

The prime human agent.

The first place in this movement belongs, as has been shown, to the Unseen Factor.

Now it properly falls to speak of the prime agent through whom the Purpose realised itself.

Of Charles Booth, head of the great Atlantic shipping firm of Booth Brothers, Liverpool, Doctor of Science of Cambridge University, Privy Councillor, and author of the monumental work of seventeen volumes on “The Life and Labour of the People in London,” no general account need here be given. His record is engraved imperishably in the annals of social science and of social progress.

But of the way in which this genius of the first order operated in the movement now under survey, there must be some attempt at a description here.

The artificer of unity.

I have been asked again and again, How did it come to pass that in the assemblies composed of the most widely divergent schools of thought and grades of information, unanimity always followed Mr. Booth’s exposition of the case? Of the dynamic Influence which works unseen, I could not then speak; but I could say somewhat of the human agency. Let me repeat what I said at the time:—

The convincing, even the converting, power of his speech has been proved in every one of the Conferences he has addressed. At the close of the first, one of the gravest of men, the responsible head of one of the strongest and wealthiest trade unions—a poor law guardian and a justice of the peace to boot—turned to me and said, “I came here in doubt about the whole subject. I go back to my centre a convert—nay more, a missionary in the cause.”

A complete stranger to the *personnel* of these gatherings, knowing only that Trade Unionists were being spoken to about free Pensions for all the aged, might naturally jump to the conclusion that the enthusiastic agreement arrived at was

attained by the usual arts of the demagogue: harrowing pictures of aged destitution, glowing dreams of universal plenty, inflammatory invective against the opulent classes, and seductive appeals to a credulous cupidity. Such a thing is only worth mentioning because of its absurdly ludicrous inversion of the fact.

In Mr. Booth's statement of his case there are no appeals to passion. Neither word nor gesture is allowed to indicate strong emotion. Declamation is entirely absent. There is no hint of "eloquence" or of laboured climax. The persuasiveness is the persuasiveness of logical arrangement, of transparent clearness, and of luminous sincerity.

The style is not what you associate with the idea of a social reformer proffering a remedy for some burning grievance. It is rather the style of a professor of mathematics demonstrating to his pupils the solution of some problem in algebra or geometry. Mr. Booth is innocent of all trace of "donnishness" or academic "side"; yet the nearest analogy to his Conferences is to be found not in Parliament or Town's meeting, but in the college classroom.

Before Mr. Booth has spoken five minutes, the relation is established of professor and students. They are students any teacher might covet—hard-headed Labour leaders, veterans of industrial warfare, graduates in the stern school of reality, yet men enough to sit humbly and receptively at the feet of the expert.

Anyone in doubt about the future of British Labour need only to have seen these Conferences to be reassured. When the leaders display such readiness to learn from competent authority, the rank and file will not go far astray. No specialist in a German University could show more profound reverence for the man who *knows* than do these "duly accredited representatives" of our working classes.

Their confidence is inevitably increased by the teacher's rare gifts of exposition. As one of them said: "When Mr. Booth speaks, you do not think of what he says or how he says it: you see the thing itself grow before you." As a consequence they end by finding his conclusions engraved on their minds with a sort of intrinsic inevitableness.

Perhaps Mr. Booth's addresses may best be described as a superlative series of University Extension Lectures in Sociology. The resemblance is further borne out by the printed notes or outline of his lecture which he puts into the hands of his hearers, and to which he refers them point by point, number by number, as he proceeds. Is not this indeed a new kind of political propaganda?

A luminous teacher.

Labour Leaders as students.

A moulder of mind.

Here is a copy of the "Notes of Mr. Booth's Argument" which is headed, "Endowment of Old Age":—

ENDOWMENT OF OLD AGE.
Notes of Mr. C. Booth's argument.

" 1.—There is now a practical agreement as to the facts. The deplorable extent of poverty in old age is admitted by all. Pauperism is only one symptom of it.

" 2.—It is also recognised that the old are industrially at an increasing disadvantage, so that they do not, except indirectly, share in the general prosperity.

" 3.—The ideal condition in old age must provide for—

- (a) Comfort.
- (b) Independence.
- (c) The power to give, as well as to receive.

" 4.—The maintenance of the old is now drawn from the following sources:—

- (a) Accumulations (inherited or saved).
- (b) Present earnings.
- (c) Deferred payment for work done in the past.
- (d) Insurance.
- (e) Assistance from children.
- (f) Charitable aid.
- (g) Poor Law relief.

" 5.—All these, together, are acknowledged in very many cases to be insufficient: the last two are undesirable, and assistance from children is now often pressed too hard.

" 6.—PROBLEM—WHILE INCREASING THE WHOLE SUM, TO DISPENSE WITH THE UNDESIRABLE SOURCES.

" 7.—Any possible contribution of the State is only a small item in the total required.

" 8.—Contributory schemes are ruled out—

- (a) Because they necessarily interfere with existing thrift agencies.
- (b) Because they hardly provide at all for women or the poorest classes.
- (c) Because they (in any case) offer no benefit for a generation to come.

" 9.—The ESSENTIALS OF A NON-CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME (such as I favour) are—

- (a) Cost to be borne by general taxation.
- (b) Benefits to be for all who claim them.

" 10.—I hold that assistance from the State, under these conditions—

- (a) Would not check, but rather stimulate the accumulation of property by the people.

- (b) That it would not materially affect the chances of earnings by the old; nor rates of wages generally.
- (c) That deferred earnings would not be interfered with, and that small industrial or friendly endowments would be encouraged.
- (d) That insurance would still be needed, and its provision be facilitated.
- (e) That help from children would continue to be given.
- (f) That charity would be less needed, and begging become less fraudulent.
- (g) That the Poor Law might be reformed, and out-relief abolished.

“ 11.—I propose to discuss these seven points and to consider the objections that may be raised.”

The address based on these notes naturally varied somewhat according to the varying environment in which they were uttered. It may best be represented here by the verbatim report of Mr. Booth's speech at the last of the seven Conferences :—

“ Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I do not propose to-day to lay before you any cut-and-dried scheme with regard to Old Age Pensions. In fact, my position on this subject has been, quite naturally, a little misunderstood, and I should like to make it clear before I go on to do what I mean to do; that is, to lay before you an argument. Some seven years ago, when my attention was first directed to this subject, there were a number of schemes before the public, and to one of these my mind was particularly directed; partly, perhaps, by its audacity, and partly by the logic—a perfect kind of logic in its way—which it has. I began to think out what other people had suggested with regard to a complete or universal scheme of Old Age Pensions, and the more I looked into it, the more its good points came out, and the more the bad points of the other contributory schemes, its rivals, stood out also. So that I do commit myself so far as to formulate an argument in its favour. I do not mean to formulate a scheme, and I have always been of opinion that the theory had to be accepted before it could be put into practice, and that the final scheme would not be the result of this man's or that man's efforts, but of many minds being brought to bear upon an important subject. (Applause.)

“ The history of the inquiry was, as you know, that the Government of the day appointed a Royal Commission. Satisfied that there was need for investigation, they chose a

Mr. Booth's address.

No scheme.

The Royal Commission.

number of men—chose them very well, I think—and a very influential and important Commission, presided over by Lord Aberdare, was the result. I had the honour of sitting on that Commission, and we pursued the inquiry for two or three years, and finally produced a report. We gathered together an immense amount of information and evidence—exhaustive information and evidence—but in reporting we could not agree. It was not to be expected, perhaps, that we should, because the Commission had been expressly chosen for their divergence of views to begin with. (Laughter.) It would have been almost impossible to have convinced each other; but, we did do this: having all these divergent views represented on the Commission we pretty nearly exhausted the subject. The evidence taken before that Commission is an excellent and invaluable piece of work; but the Commission finally could agree practically upon one thing only, and that was that the subject was extremely serious, and that the final discussion ought to be handed over to another body, but not of so many persons, that should be appointed especially with a view of finding a practical solution.

Lord
Rothschild's
Committee.

“That resolution was accepted and taken up by the present Government, and a smaller body was appointed, a body of experts, presided over by Lord Rothschild. It was called the Lord Rothschild Committee. They pursued their inquiry for about two years, and they issued their report last autumn. They did not differ amongst themselves, but they failed to find any solution. One reason why, I think, they did not find a solution was that they read into their reference a meaning which Mr. Chamberlain has said was not the meaning that he intended it to have, namely, the exclusion of all except contributory schemes. But at any rate, the contributory schemes—those schemes to which the ultimate recipient would have contributed—were thoroughly considered and discussed by this Committee and rejected. Schemes to which my argument is directed were not brought before that Committee at all.

Agreement
on facts.

“Well, I will now proceed to lay before you the same argument that convinced me. There has been distributed amongst you a leaflet which gives a brief summary of this argument. I regret I did not provide a greater number so that everyone here might have had a copy, but I will, at any rate, take care in what I say to supply what is needed so that no one in the audience will, I hope, lose the track of what I have to say. As I go along I will read each note, and the first note is: ‘There is now a practical agreement as to the facts. The deplorable extent of poverty in old age is admitted

by all. Pauperism is only one symptom of it.' This is a rather singular position for a great public question. That the facts *are* universally admitted is due to the excellent work of the two bodies, the Commission and the Committee, that I have mentioned.

"They have shown us statistically and by clear evidence what, after all, we most of us know from our own experience of the facts around us: that the amount of poverty in old age is very, very great; that earnings break down, and that savings are exhausted, and that some time between 60 and 70 a very large proportion of the old people are in need of some kind of help, are not independent, either come for help to the Poor Law or are supported and helped by their friends or by charity. This large proportion of something like a third of the old people with regard to the Poor Law, and, of course, an additional number of those who don't come upon the Poor Law, but are nevertheless equally or nearly equally poor—this very large proportion is the startling fact that was brought out absolutely by these inquiries, and is now agreed to; and I don't think there is any difference of opinion at all on that question, nor on the point that pauperism is only one symptom—a symptom we can most easily diagnose, but only one symptom—of the trouble.

Mass of aged poverty.

"It is also recognised—this is my second point—it is also recognised that the old are industrially at an increasing disadvantage—(hear, hear)—so that they do not, except indirectly, share in the general prosperity. That idea is more recent. It has only gradually crept into our consciousness that that is so; that, in spite of—in fact, in consequence of—certain points which make for our prosperity, the old have a bad time. (Hear, hear.) Industry is driven harder. We are more and more concentrating the efforts of industry on the picked years of life. (Hear, hear.) We are shortening that industrial life at both ends. Quite right in regard to the children, but perforce we are also shortening it at the other end. Our old men are hardly old, but they have not got the nerve to do the kind of work which modern industrial methods demand—(hear, hear)—and further the difficulty is not one which is slipping away, which is gradually decreasing, gradually coming to an end. However bad things are, if we can feel that they are steadily and naturally improving we may be patient; but when we cannot feel with certainty that there is any such improvement, for that which the old enjoy is only what they share in an indirect way from the general rise in the standard of life, and is counterbalanced by what they naturally lose, it is not a satisfactory situation. (No,

Age at a growing disadvantage.

no.) And therefore it is that I still feel impressed, and more than ever impressed with the necessity of this question being dealt with.

The ideal old age. " Well then I will say that the ideal condition in old age—I think it important to lay out some kind of an ideal as to what it is we are aiming towards when we speak of providing for old age—should be in some way provided for. I am not talking of what a pension would provide: far from it; but the condition without which we should not be satisfied with regard to our own old people or any old people if they had not the opportunity of attaining to it. And the first condition is that of comfort, physical, bodily comfort, the comfort of warmth, the comfort of roof, the comfort of fire, the comfort of chairs, the comfort in which an old person should live. Secondly, there is independence, and that is mental comfort—(applause)—and thirdly—it is only after all a description to some extent of what I mean by independence—I think there should be the power to give as well as to receive. I do not think any are in a satisfactory condition in old age if they have to depend absolutely on their children. I think there should be mutual dependence and mutual recognition.

Youth and age in upper classes. " And here I might say that in England we have curiously two perfectly distinct ideals in the different classes. In the upper classes, the richest classes, the young depend entirely upon the old. (Laughter and applause.) I do not say that it is a bad system at all—what I say is that it is the ideal on which the upper structures, the rich and the highest classes, in England order their lives. The young people are not only brought up as children and educated—and their education is prolonged—but they are maintained by an allowance, which is increased, as necessary, according to their circumstances—when they marry and have children, and so on; and finally they in due time step into the shoes of their parents, and become holders and distributors of the wealth of that class. This system is recognised and arranged by trust deeds, and so on, and as I say, it does not work at all badly, and you have excellent family relations under it.

Among the poor. " But what a contrast it is with regard to the quite poor, where it is absolutely the opposite after infancy and childhood. The children are brought into the world and taken care of by their parents up till the end of school age. When that time comes the child is at once independent as to earnings, and an important contributor to the family income. (Hear, hear.) And as life goes on little by little the position as to wealth is reversed from what it is in the upper classes, and the old become more and more, and perhaps entirely,

dependent upon their children or grandchildren. But with the masses of the population, with this huge thing we call the middle class, there is a middle position: the old help the young, the young help the old, and there I believe you have the best and soundest system of family life. (Applause.)

“ The maintenance of the old is now drawn from the following sources: First, there are the accumulations, either inherited or saved—accumulated property. Secondly, there is insurance, which is another form of accumulated property; and thirdly, there are industrial pensions of one kind or another, which are payments for work done in the past, and in a sense are also accumulated property. Then there come the present earnings, and the present earnings hold a very considerable place, especially in country districts where the old are able to work longer than in the towns. Everywhere a good deal is undoubtedly still earned in old age. Then there come the three doubtful sources: First there is the assistance from children, which in my opinion is often pressed too hard; and secondly there is charitable aid, which, though very good in its way, is not a desirable source of support. (Hear, hear.) Finally there is the Poor Law relief, which, excepting in the form of sick asylums, is entirely bad. (Applause.)

“ Now the problem which I lay before you is how, while increasing the whole sum, to dispense with the undesirable sources; and I would say, as I have already hinted, that any possible contribution of the State could only be an item, and probably a small item, in the total required for such a life in old age as I have named as an ideal life.

“ Well then, the contributory schemes I will consider first. The contributory schemes were condemned by Lord Rothschild's Committee. Contributory schemes are those in which contributions are made by or collected from the individuals who will ultimately obtain the benefit of the pensions, and they are ruled out first because they necessarily interfere with existing thrift agencies. It is impossible to conceive any plan by which contributions can be drawn from the masses of the people alongside of Friendly Society contributions without interfering with the Friendly Societies; nor could the Government enter into a sort of partnership with the Friendly Societies without in some way interfering with them, which is not only undesirable but would never be accepted.

“ Secondly, because they hardly provide at all for the leave out women or for the poorest classes. Women can hardly be expected to become and maintain themselves members of Friendly Societies to any great extent—at any rate their

How the old are kept.

Contributory schemes

meddle with
thrift agencies,

leave out
women

numbers in Friendly Societies are extremely small. Were we to adopt a scheme and leave out the quite poorest class, and especially those sad cases where ill-health from early life has made it almost impossible for them to be accepted as members of Friendly Societies—and quite impossible for them to earn large wages—such cases are not at all infrequent, and are amongst the hardest blows of fate—we should indeed be making a cruel mistake.

" The third reason is because they in any case offer no benefit for a generation to come, and that is crushing because a contributory scheme cannot be begun when a man is already old. You all know how essential it is to get members young, to get a long period of subscriptions, to get the accumulated interest that makes any provision for the future possible. It is for these three reasons that the contributory schemes are completely ruled out.

" So now I pass to the essentials of a non-contributory scheme, such as I favour. Now, it is possible to have a non-contributory partial scheme; that is to say, you may pick out some particular class and benefit it, and not the others. That evidently has grave disadvantages unless it be taken in piece-meal fashion, merely to enable the financial difficulty to be met bit by bit. That is the only way in which, I think, a piecemeal scheme can be looked upon as tenable, because otherwise there would be an inherent injustice in it. And so it seems to me that the essentials of a non-contributory scheme are, first, that the cost be borne by general taxation—that is to get rid of all attempts to collect money week by week and to get rid of all the complications of huge accumulated sums, and endless, complicated, and costly book-keeping.

" Secondly, the benefits in any scheme that is to be at all complete or desirable must be for all who claim them. (Hear, hear.) Now, I do not want to say that I think it necessary that everyone should claim them any more than it is necessary for everyone to send their children to the elementary schools. I think a parallel may very properly be drawn from the position there. But what I want to lay before you is the principle that all should pay by taxation and all have a right to benefit. (Applause.) And I do not wish to earmark any particular source of revenue for this purpose at all. Let us consider it as money spent for the general welfare of the people, just as you do for any other national need; let us pay our share in the same way that we do for the defence of the country, or the same as we do for education, or for any other of the great purposes for which revenue is raised; and let the principles of taxation be a separate question properly

and offer no help till long after.

A non-contributory scheme.

From general taxation.

For all by all.

considered for all these subjects, and specially considered for this one.

“ The following points are those which appear to me to embrace the difficulties of this scheme, and I will first read them, and then discuss them. I maintain that assistance from the State under these conditions would not check, but rather stimulate, the accumulation of property by the people; that insurance would still be needed, and its provision be facilitated; that industrial pensions would not be interfered with, and that small industrial and friendly endowments would still be encouraged; that it would not materially affect the chances of earnings by the old, nor rates of wages generally; that help from children would continue to be given; that charity would be less needed, and begging become less fraudulent; and that the Poor Law might be reformed, and out-relief abolished. Now, I believe that in these seven points I shall cover all the objections that are raised to this scheme, or nearly all; but if any fresh objections are raised in the audience, I will do my best to answer them.

Seven objections met.

“ First, with regard to its effect upon the accumulation of property. It is said, shortly, that this scheme is a scheme for the discouraging of thrift. (Laughter.) That sentence was actually printed in the appendix to the report of the Rothschild Committee. Now, gentlemen, I claim that it would do nothing of the kind. (Hear, hear.) Savings are not influenced to any appreciable extent by the fear of a destitute old age. I do not think we could find an instance of this if we look around us among the people we know. Savings are largely made, and most largely made, by those who no longer have any fear at all of destitution. I do not say that the fear of immediate destitution is not a very great force in making people work in the present. There are men who really can hardly nerve themselves to work unless they are obliged to do it because they need the money. (Laughter and applause.) But these men would not save for fear they should be destitute at some unknown time. They all say the same thing: ‘ I should be dead a long time before that.’ (Renewed laughter.) They do not believe they will live, for one thing. If they begin to save it is for something far more definite and immediate. They save for pleasure; they save for the summer holiday; they save by provident banks, and so on, and have a nice sum coming in for the winter for new clothes, or whatever it is they desire. There is a great deal of temporary saving, if that is saving. I know they will save for immediate objects, for trade purposes, to get a little capital together for the stock they need; or they will save for

Discourage
thrift?

security, to get a nest egg, to get some money in the bank that they will not be at the absolute mercy of the fear of being thrown out of work at some time. There are savings of all kinds, but the actual saving for old age is a very rare thing, and therefore I don't think that the taking away of the dread of poverty and destitution in old age will decrease these savings.

**Hope, not fear,
the motive.**

"On the other hand it will increase them, I think. I will tell you why. It is not despair or fear that makes people save, but hope. And this would add an element of hope; it would take away the fear, the almost certainty, that if these people do live they will have to go on the Poor Law. And then there would be something to save towards if a man is sure that if he gets old he will have a certain income—not quite enough to live on, and certainly not enough to live on comfortably. Then there will be some object in looking forward to old age. Now if he saves there is the haunting fear that the savings will be dispersed, that they will go; but if he had the certainty that a small fixed income would begin at a certain age there would be in the fact an impetus to increase it—to make a possibly bare existence into a certain one and possibly a comfortable one. I believe, therefore, that this plan would not check but would stimulate the accumulation of property and would make people more careful, more steady, more thrifty, more ready to look forward to the future.

**Will insurance
suffer?**

"Insurance would still be needed, and its provision facilitated. There again, it seems a common argument to assume that 5s. a week at a certain age, 65, or whatever it might be, would take away the necessity for any form of insurance. Surely that would not be so. What people mostly insure against now is sickness and the funeral money, and that form of insurance would be far more complete if they knew that when a certain time came they would get a small pension in place of or in addition to the sick allowance. The Friendly Societies, as you all know, have taken an extremely liberal view of their responsibilities. They have prolonged, and continually do prolong, sick allowance, so that it practically becomes an old age pension. (Hear, hear, and applause.) They do not bargain to do this; they do it from a very natural, and also a very generous sentiment; but, if they could take into account the fact that there would be at a certain age an old age allowance coming in, they could make their scales much more liberal, and above all, much more solvent. There would be far less of insolvency and of lapses.

"Insurances would be encouraged and facilitated, and

there would, too, be a great effort made, I think, to provide **Just before pension?** for the years immediately preceding the time when pensions would be granted. At whatever age the pensions are fixed there will be some years of difficulty preceding. I feel perfectly sure in my own mind that we should not attain—and I do not think it desirable that we should attain—pensions at the earliest age at which men break down under the stress of industry; partly because some men break down sooner than others, and men break down sooner in some trades than in others, and one must fix a general rule, and also because it would be far more likely to be a difficulty with regard to wages.

“ My third point is that industrial pensions would not be interfered with, and that small industrial or friendly endowments would still be encouraged. There are two classes to which this applies. There are cases in which the pension is, as it were, bargained for, or taken into consideration, as with the police or the army or navy, when a man presumably takes a lower wage with the idea of ultimately getting a pension. It would be altogether unfair to attack that in any way, or to interfere with it in any way. It has been part of the bargain under which the man has done his work, and he has a right to it. If it became certain the man would not get a pension from the State, the system would be altered, and he would get more wages. That class of pensions would not be affected at all.

“ But there is another class of pensions that were not bargained for but have been granted to old servants as a recognition of work done in the past. It is not exactly a charity; it may be partly a charity, but it is owing more to a sense of justice and gratitude on the part of the employer for the old servant—a feeling that he would not like to see that old servant in distress in his old age. Certainly a number of kindly pensions of that sort are granted, or work is provided suitable for the old people to do, not so much with regard to its economic value as to keep the old people going. Now, I don't think that these would suffer either. It is not an important matter, but it has been disputed and I therefore mention it. If an employer knows his old servant will get a pension from the State why should he give him one? the question was asked. It is quite true; that may be the case; but I think it would often facilitate matters. Many an employer feels that he can't give a pension because it would spread over too long a time. But if the time were shortened between the accident or the breakdown, and a State pension were receivable at a certain age, he would say, ‘ I will pay

Existing Pensions?

Old servants?

the pension until it comes in,' and the man would get a pension when he wants it, and the Government pension later on, when if he did not get the pension at once it would be almost too late. Therefore I think that these pensions would not be interfered with, but on the whole stimulated by such a scheme as I favour.

" Now comes the really serious crux, and that is the question of wages. It has been confidently stated by many that pensions would come indirectly off wages, that, for amounts paid in this way by the State, wages would be reduced; that it would be a rate-in-aid of wages, as is said. That is a very serious charge and one which demands very serious consideration and discussion. I take one comfort from the way in which it has been discussed, so far, and that is that those who lay most stress upon this and say that pensions will sap the manhood of the English race, and that it would be entirely taken off their wages and is a regular pauperising influence, and so on; also attack the scheme from the altogether opposite, and I think inconsistent ground, that it is a terrible Socialistic measure, transferring the wealth from the rich to the poor. (Laughter.) Now if the poor man is going to pay for it out of his wages, the second objection does not apply. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) However, let us consider the thing on its merits, because it is a very serious question.

**Wages raised,
rather.**

" First, in regard to the old—those who are presumably all in receipt of this pension. They would not compete with each other. You do occasionally have cases in which old people take starvation wages, not expecting or intending to live on what they earn but using it merely to eke out what they receive from other sources. It is held to be a hardship on those who are striving to live independent lives, that rates of pay should be dragged down by these subsidised people, but that would not apply if they all had it. Then would the fact that everybody has this little advantage cause them to work cheaper? I do not think it would. I think, on the contrary, in many cases it would have an opposite effect, and that they would be in a stronger position to hold out for proper rates of pay, and in addition I feel we may trust a good deal to the Trade Unions to maintain the position. But in one way or another I do not think the old people would suffer materially, or that it is a matter which deserves any very great consideration. Then it is said that competition would arise between those who are just below and those who are just above pension age. I think that theoretically is true, but I do not think that practically it would have any great effect. If you have

now the men who have reached 65, and who have laid by something, I do not think you will find that as a matter of fact they do work cheaper than the people who have not got it. I doubt it very much, but that is a point which I should very much like to hear discussed.

"And finally, there is the economic argument that the whole rate of wages depends on the cost of existence, and that the cost of existence includes everything from the cradle to the grave, and that if you take away from the individual a portion of this cost of existence towards the end of life he will become a cheaper person—a person who can be hired cheaper. That is a high economic argument in which I do not believe one iota. I am not exactly an economist, but I have looked upon it as well as I can from a practical point of view, and I do not think it would have a bad effect at all. I think wages are based not upon the cost of producing a man and keeping him alive, but upon a certain thing which I call the standard of life and which may include any number of unnecessary things which yet go to make up the standard of life. I think that standard is beyond analysis in this particular way which is attempted. I do not think you can work it out that the labouring man costs so much to produce, but what I think you have to work out is what are the customs of the country and the general condition under which labour is carried on. One of these conditions is the bargain that is made, especially the collective bargain, for the price that is paid for the labour. There are an enormous number of elements which go into the fixing of the rate of wages, and this particular point, the having of a small pension at 65, would not, I think, affect that argument. But I fully admit that these are serious questions.

"Then there is the question of the help from the children, and there, I think, the kindly feeling between parents and children will not be in the slightest degree affected by this. (Applause.) In many cases it would have the opposite effect in two ways, because if they give it up as a bad job, and the old people go into the workhouse, you lose what the children perhaps would have been able to do for their parents, if their parents had been able to contribute something towards the house expenses. An old man or an old woman with merely 5s. a week would be a far more possible guest in a son or daughter's house than one without it, and my impression is that the children would do just about as much actually as they do now, and do it in more comfortable and less strained circumstances.

"And finally, the Poor Law does need reform. (Hear,

A high economic argument.

Will children help less?

hear.) It is an extremely difficult task, but a task that would be immensely lightened if the bulk of the old people were withdrawn from it. We should then, I think, be able to divide those to whom relief is still necessary into far more definite classes, treating each class suitably, and I think we should be able to make very considerable economies, but above all we should have a much more efficient system—one in which there would be far less waste of expenditure than there is now. Gentlemen, I have done. I would only beg of you to ask any questions that you may desire, and I will do my best to answer them, and to meet any objections that may be raised. (Loud applause.)."



THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THOMAS BURT, M.P.,
Privy Councillor.

CHAPTER X

IN THE STRONGHOLD OF NORTHUMBRIAN INDIVIDUALISM

Northumberland and Durham were first in the field. As a *The Newcastle test.* Tynesider I may be allowed to be proud of the fact. Despite the distractions of Christmastide and the New Year, Mr. Burt and Mr. Wilkie had issued invitations and got all the arrangements ready for a Conference on January 17th.

“ Newcastle, I have always been told, is a test place. Actors and lecturers reckon that if they succeed at Newcastle they will succeed anywhere. It may prove to be so in regard to our movement. If Newcastle repeats the experience of Browning Hall, we may be sure of the rest of the country.”

So I ventured to say to Mr. Booth, as we journeyed northward. It was not the critical spirit of a Newcastle audience that suggested awkward possibilities. It was the rugged Individualism that was then rampant in the North. A relic of the old days of Border warfare, when every castle was a kingdom to itself, it survived in an outspoken dislike of all forms of compulsory Collectivism. As is well known, it had led even the Trade Unionists, and notably the miners, of these two Northern counties to stand aloof from schemes of intervention which commanded the support of the rest of the Labour world. The miners’ Executive had, as I have reported, emancipated itself in regard to Pensions; but in the hundred delegates who were coming to the Conference from all parts of the two counties, I did not know what antagonistic feeling might be discovered.

Mr. Burt, with the genial tact and social wisdom which distinguish him, had invited about a dozen of the principal Labour men—the Labour Cabinet of the North—to meet Mr. Booth at tea at his house in Burdon Terrace for a talk over matters before the meeting began. So was formed a nucleus of intellectual agreement and personal sympathy most fruitful in after-results. I walked down to the meeting with our chief Individualist, the late Mr. Ralph Young. I

*Over the
teacups.*

found him an enthusiastic supporter of the Tsar's plea for disarmament. It was not hard to show how funds now applied to the defence of the country from the misery of foreign invasion might be devoted to the defence of the nation from the misery of indigent age, without materially impinging on the sovereign freedom of the individual.

The meeting was held in Burt Hall—the name a token of the more than Border loyalty which gathered round the chief of Northern Labour, our host and chairman. It was the first time the hall had ever been used for other than purely miners' business.

**One hundred
picked men.**

There were present fifty-seven representatives from thirty-seven Trade Unions, twenty-nine from twenty Co-operative Societies, eight from three Friendly Societies, and three from two Trades Councils. The organized Labour of Northumberland and Durham was there in the persons of its most trusted leaders. Canon Moore Ede and Dr. Robert Spence Watson were among the visitors.

Mr. Booth's address was listened to with that intensity of critical attention which Northumbrians think a characteristic of their county. A most thoughtful and instructive discussion followed.

Then came the astonishing result. These hundred delegates of Northern Labour, hardheaded, independent, with a hereditary tendency to separateness of judgment, found themselves entirely and absolutely agreed in support of Mr. Booth's contention. The vote was unanimous in support of a universal and non-contributory system of Pensions to be provided out of the general taxation of the realm.

It would be bad taste to count up the converts who had held other views in other days. But there were many fresh points which emerged in the discussion. The experience of the Northumberland Miners' Relief Fund showed that the old age benefit they gave—some 4s. a week—encouraged members not only to supplement that amount, but also to cultivate care and thrift in general.

Mr. Charles Fenwick, M.P., discerned in the educative methods of Mr. Booth's propaganda a most desirable innovation. He expressed the hope that henceforth in the discussion of political measures the ground should be cleared, and fundamental principles laid down by social experts after the manner of Mr. Booth. It would then, he argued, be an easier matter to proceed to details of actual legislation. That was a shrewd North country glimpse into the future.

By one of those coincidences in which our work abounds, the same winter which witnessed the series of Conferences on

Old Age Pensions saw the Peace campaign carried all over the country in support of the Tsar's appeal for reduction of armaments. The first public meeting in furtherance of the Tsar's policy was held in Browning Hall on October 9th. A Peace meeting, initiated by the Settlement, was held in Newington Hall, Walworth, on January 31st. The two movements were not merely synchronous: they were supplementary counterparts. The less spent on powder, the more to spare for Pensions. This question of the connection between the policy of peace abroad and social reform at home was urged by more speakers than one. I pointed it out more fully in my brother's "War against War," on January 27th.

Before parting, the meeting appointed a committee to further the movement in the two counties. The proceedings were still kept from the newspapers, but a printed digest similar to that issued after the first Conference, and less condensed, with full list of delegates, societies, and number of members in each society, was distributed by the Newcastle Committee through the lodges and branches of all forms of associated Labour. The two counties were permeated with it.

The movement had stood the Newcastle test, and had emerged triumphant.

There was good news for the Fellowship of Followers, which met on the night after the Conference.

Twin movements—for Peace and Pensions.

CHAPTER XI

YORKSHIRE, LANCASHIRE, WESTERN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

The Leeds conference.

Leeds Conference, held on February 23rd, threatened at first to be less satisfactory. Personally, I missed my train North, missed therefore the preliminary chat over the tea-cups with local leaders: and only arrived after the meeting had begun. Then St. James's Hall, where we were gathered, though perhaps well adapted for other purposes, was not suited for conference. The platform was too high above the ground floor, where most of the delegates sat. The chief speakers seemed remote: an illusion strengthened by the misty night. Mr. Booth seemed conscious of these depressing facts. Nevertheless, Yorkshire Labour was unmistakably there. Convened by Councillor Connellan, Secretary of the Leeds Trades Council, it also included representatives of the Trades Councils of Bradford, Sheffield, Hull, Middlesbrough, Rotherham, Keighley, York, Stanningley, Shipley, Halifax, Barnsley, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Mexborough, Spen Valley, with a total membership of 76,500, along with delegates from other independent Trade Unions, Friendly and Co-operative Societies. Mr. P. Kennedy presided.

Yorkshire Socialism.

The discussion which arose after Mr. Booth's address was very different from what we had heard in Newcastle and Walworth. Yorkshire was as pronouncedly Socialistic as Northumberland and Durham had been Individualistic. Possibly Trades Councils were then more easily "captured" by Socialists than were the Trade Unions. Be that as it may, the demand for a national Pensions system which had secured the zealous support of Northumberland Individualism nearly came to grief at the hands of Yorkshire Socialism. "Why make all this fuss about old age when the whole system of society needed to be revolutionised? Were there not other questions of more importance than aged poverty? Were there not the unemployed?" Then the tendency manifest at all the Conferences was here very strong: to ride off from

the main issue on questions of the incidence of taxation. The "unearned increment" was much in evidence. How the money for Pensions should be raised seemed to be a much more alluring subject of debate—it was certainly the source of more divergent views—than the preliminary consideration whether Pensions should be given at all. Such was the drift of the debate.

When I was called on to speak, the prospect seemed tragic. I should explain that my place in these Conferences was generally towards the close, when I could gather up the main points on which the meeting was agreed, and relegate the minor disagreements to their proper insignificance. But at Leeds the task looked hopeless. Then I remembered Who had led from the first. Signal victory had been given us hitherto. We could not be forsaken now. I felt the swirl around me of prayerful influence from afar. The answer came. The meeting was won over. In a few minutes antagonism, differences, all sank into the background: only points of agreement remained in the foreground. The Conference resolved to leave the sources of the requisite revenue entirely unspecified. It rose to absolute unanimity in support of the claim for free Pensions from the State for all aged persons.

Yorkshire had fallen into line with Northumberland and Durham.

It, too, formed its local committee for continued propaganda, consisting of seven men, with Councillor Connellan as convener.

Leeds was the first Conference to be reported in the newspapers. Publicity was no longer a danger.

Lancashire's turn came next. Two days later, at the offices of the Co-operative Wholesale Society, Manchester, there were convened by the Lancashire Federation of Trades Councils, of which Mr. G. D. Kelley, J.P., was secretary, about a hundred delegates, 46 representing the Trades Councils of 26 towns: 22 came from 12 Trade Unions; 13 stood for 8 Co-operative Associations; and 7 for three Friendly Societies. We had before us the very pick and flower of Lancashire Labour. They could not be docketed, like the Northumbrians as Individualists, nor like the Yorkshires as Socialists. They were simply and entirely Lancashire men: and those who know Lancashire know what that means. Mr. J. R. Clynes, of Oldham, presided, and Mr. Booth's speech was followed by a vigorous debate. Here emerged very clearly what has been a common experience of the movement. Middle class visitors, invited

Unseen
Reserves
called out.

Unanimous.

The
Manchester
meeting.

by courtesy to take part in the discussion, displayed a hankering after the now shattered idols of the Charity Organisation Society, and occasionally gave a complexion of their colour to the conversation. But when it came to the vote in which only Labour delegates could take part, not a hand was held up for the middle class contentions. Mr. Booth's demand was again endorsed, with entire unanimity.

Unanimous.

Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, and Durham had all gone solid in support of Mr. Booth.

At Bristol:

We had asked Mr. Booth to grant his presence at four great cities. But other centres were determined not to be left out. Mr. Booth consented to add a fifth and a sixth to the list of Conferences. So Mr. Curle, J.P., Secretary of the Bristol Trades Council convened in that city on March 11th, a gathering numbering about 70, representative of the Trades Councils of Bristol, Bath, Swindon, Swansea, Barry, Newport, Weston-super-Mare, Gloucester, Stroud, Somersetshire Miners' Association, Forest of Dean Labour Association, two or three Co-operative Societies, as many Friendly Societies, and a few other bodies including Bristol Board of Guardians. It was not so exclusively restricted to organized Labour as previous Conferences. Mr. Sheppard, President of the home Council, took the chair. We were promised here the somewhat appetizing variety of strong and active opposition. But Mr. Booth came, spoke, conquered. The final result was all but identically the same as in the previous Conferences. There was one hand, and one hand only, held up at Bristol against the formula of an Old Age Pension from the State for every one. That solitary hand has the distinction of recording the only vote opposed to Mr. Booth's contention in the whole series of Conferences. Its picturesque isolation makes the general unanimity stand out with the greater impressiveness.

A solitary opponent.

The Glasgow two hundred.

The movement could not be limited to England. In response to requests from across the Border, Mr. Booth consented to attend a Conference in Glasgow on March 14th. It was convened by the Glasgow Trades Council, acting through its Secretary, Mr. Isaac Mitchell. Between two and three hundred attended the Conference at St. Andrew's Hall. They included representatives from Trades Councils and Trade Unions in many parts of Scotland. Aberdeen was well in evidence. There were also present members of the City Council. The University was represented by Professor and Lady Mary Murray, and by Dr. Smart, Professor of Economics. Mr. George Galloway, who presided, concluded his opening address with a reference to the religious aspect

of the movement. There were, he said, two sides to Christianity: the spiritual and the humane. Great prominence had been given to the spiritual; it was about time they laid stress on the humane as well. In meeting as they did that night, they knew they were following in the footsteps of their Lord and Master Jesus Christ. The questions and speeches which followed Mr. Booth's statement showed that his ploughshare had been practically turning up virgin soil. Many of the speakers were pre-occupied with theories of fiscal resource, and single-taxers were much to the fore. But they grew to see that their first business was to decide whether they wanted State Pensions or not, leaving the question of ways and means for consideration at a later stage. The final vote was taken somewhat hurriedly, as the hour was late, but it was entirely unanimous. Scottish Labour, through its spokesmen there present, gave in its adhesion to the demand for universal Old Age Pensions. Delegates were also elected to serve for Scotland on the National Committee. **Unanimous.**

CHAPTER XII

EFFECT IN PARLIAMENT

The movement now national.

The movement was now assuming national proportions. It could no longer be hid. After the Newcastle Conference the proceedings were thrown open to the Press, and reported at varying length. Mr. Booth's printed Notes were being discussed in the Unions and Lodges which sent delegates. Newspapers and magazines began to burn with the question. Partisan recriminations forced it forward.

The Conference to be held in Birmingham on March 25th was being convened by Mr. George Cadbury, and all the arrangements bore witness to his thoroughness and generosity. The area of representation covered nineteen Midland counties. Between two and three thousand invitations were sent out. The acceptances revealed an interest as wide as it was intense. The Lord Mayor had kindly offered the Council Chamber as place of meeting, but that was found to be too small for the numbers intending to be present.

The Midlands and Joseph Chamberlain.

All this ferment in the Midlands did not escape the attention of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. As is well known, he was most sensitive to the development of public opinion in the region where he was political lord paramount. On the 18th of March he wrote from London:—

“ I am obliged by your letter of the 16th inst., with invitation to attend the Conference on Old Age Pensions which is to be held in Birmingham on the 25th inst. You have rightly assumed that, owing to my work in London, it will not be possible for me to attend on this occasion, but I shall await with great interest the report of your proceedings. While most persons are agreed as to the greatness of the evil with which we have to deal, there is marked difference of opinion as to the lines on which a remedy can be found, and any discussion which is calculated to throw light on this important question will be most valuable.”

Even before the Conference was held, he had evidence enough to show that the people in his own peculiar sphere of

influence were just as little prepared as the other parts of the country to rest satisfied with the negative conclusions of Lord Rothschild's Committee.

On March 22nd he reopened the whole question in Parliament. He took occasion from the Second Reading of a Bill introduced by Sir J. F. Flannery to engage in a general survey of the situation in respect of Old Age Pensions. First of all he announced the intention of the Government to appoint a Select Committee to consider the subject again. Next he repudiated the idea that it was the concern of any one Party in the State. He declared it eminently desirable that the best men of all Parties should take part in the endeavour to find a remedy. He pronounced Lord Rothschild's Committee wrong in the limiting interpretation they placed upon the reference. He declared that the question must be approached by sections. He then in effect renounced his old suggestions by declaring it a mistake to confine assistance entirely to those who have themselves directly contributed to the pensions. "It is agreed," he said, "that we must put aside at once any attempt to secure compulsory contributions from the working classes." He in effect endorsed Mr. Booth's criticisms of contributory systems. At the same time he regarded a universal system as impracticable on account of its enormous cost and lack of discrimination. He concluded by stating that the Government was still anxious to find a remedy and willing to try every experiment which had a probability of success. It would not rest satisfied until it had done something to make the condition of the poor more satisfactory than it is.

As the leader of the Opposition heartily approved this irenicon, good citizens felt henceforth at liberty to support the movement without fear of compromising themselves in partisan polemics. This was precisely the spirit which had pervaded the Labour Conferences. Partisan references were extremely rare, and when they did occur they were either ruled out or laughed out as irrelevant.

The conviction was general that but for the series of Labour Conferences, the Pensions question would not have been reopened. The volume of national opinion which had found expression could not be ignored.

The ready acquiescence of leaders of both Parties in the suggestion that Pensions should no longer be a Party question, but should be consigned to the good offices of the best men in all Parties, was—perhaps cynically—regarded in some quarters as a graceful way of shelving the whole matter.

A Select Committee to be formed.

The Contributory Principle given up.

Why the Committee?

CHAPTER XIII

THE VOICE OF THE MIDLANDS

**The
Birmingham
Conference.**

**'Christian
men of all
Parties.'**

The Birmingham Conference was finally held (March 25th) in the large and beautiful Examination Hall of the Technical School—one of those municipal palaces which are the glory of Birmingham. The room, which accommodates 700, was crowded almost to suffocation. Every delegate on entering presented his credentials from the Trade Union, Friendly Society, or Co-operative Association which sent him. The leaders of the organized Labour of the Midlands were there in compact array, and the sight of their upturned faces, eager, intelligent, resolute, was an experience long to be remembered. Prominent representatives of the philanthropic and civic life of Birmingham occupied the platform. The sudden and lamented death of Mr. Richard Cadbury, a few days before, prevented his brother presiding as had been intended. The chair was taken instead by Councillor Stevens, who had presided over the Birmingham meeting of the Trade Union Congress, and proved himself now, as then, a most admirable chairman. Mr. George Cadbury sent a letter insisting on our duty "as a Christian nation" to make better provision for the aged poor. He advocated the adoption of some measure like the New Zealand Act. He urged Friendly Societies and Trade Unions to agree on some definite Pension scheme, and to make it a test question at the next general election. "Christian men of all Parties would be willing to forward such a Bill." A letter from Sir Walter Foster, M.P., declared that "there is no scheme for Pensions so good as Mr. Booth's," and that but for the cost he should "simply support it." This meeting soon showed that it was not so easily deterred. The chairman led off with a frank advocacy of universal Pensions. Mr. Booth had a great reception, and was in excellent form. He referred to Mr. Chamberlain's speech on the previous Wednesday, and said "the contributory schemes were condemned by Lord Rothschild's Committee, and on Wednesday evening in the House of Commons they were absolutely and entirely condemned by

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who at one time believed that in them the solution of the problem would be found. And the reason of this condemnation which he gave in his speech is exactly the same as I have given in my report." The half-hour of questions which came afterwards was the occasion of much crisp and lively repartee, which delighted the audience. At first it seemed as though Mr. Booth's refusal to discriminate between rich and poor, or "deserving" and "undeserving" would prove a stone of stumbling. But the parallel of free education cleared the way. Just as you provide free schools for every child in the realm, argued Mr. Booth, so you may provide free pensions for every aged person in the realm. You do not compel a rich man to send his son to the Board School; you need not compel a rich man to receive the pension; but in both cases the State can make equal provision. Universality alone, he contended, would remove the pauper taint.

Free Schools
and free
Pensions.

But would he bestow the same pension on the idle and reprobate as on the thrifty and industrious? Mr. Booth replied with a smile that already the reprobate got their subsistence out of society, and he did not propose to take away any of their rights.

The subsequent discussion was remarkable for the resolute purpose which ran through it. The meeting showed itself thoroughly in earnest, bent on getting something done, and that speedily; fiercely, almost contemptuously, resenting the intrusion of merely partisan issues. The moment it appeared that a speaker was more anxious to denounce the Government for breaking its pledges than to advance the movement towards practical achievement, the meeting refused to listen to him: and when he announced himself a Radical, simply swept him away in an avalanche of ridicule. The cut and thrust of the partisan might do for Parliament: they were felt to be utterly out of place in a company of serious working men resolved on obtaining some definite practical good. A yet more significant scene occurred later, which suggests how widely different the world of the working man is from that in which middle-class politicians once seemed to live and move. A speaker wished to suggest that Old Age Pensions might well be obtained by "the resumption of Church funds." His very first reference to "the crisis in the Church" was greeted with jeers. These were redoubled when he mentioned the word "Disestablishment," and only the resolute intervention of the chairman secured him a hearing until, in the fewest words possible, he got out his idea. The storm of disapprobation and even merriment

No partisan
nonsense.

Disendowment
at a discount.

which broke loose at the sound of "Disendowment" drove him to his seat. And this, be it remembered, was in the Birmingham of Bright and Dale and the early Chamberlain! The suggestion could hardly have received less respectful treatment at the hands of curates and country parsons in Church Congress assembled.

Gradually the meeting settled down to agreement on the main point. The venerable Alderman Manton, for many years chairman of the Birmingham Board of Guardians, gave the movement his patriarchal blessing. There was some excellent speaking by prominent Labour Leaders. The conviction visibly deepened that the duty of the Conference was not to suggest compromises or concessions in advance, but to make perfectly clear what it wanted in its entirety: to affirm a principle, not to draft a Bill.

Finally, a resolution was submitted, declaring that "this Conference of duly accredited representatives" gave "a general and hearty support" to the principles set forth by Mr. Booth. And this resolution—printed in the agenda paper, which was in everyone's hands—duly and deliberately moved, seconded, and supported—was carried with absolute unanimity. The enormous significance of this unanimous vote is confirmed by the following excerpt from the official register of attendance:—

There were present from

			No. of Delegates sent.	No. of Members represented.
Manchester Unity and other Orders of				
Oddfellows	...	...	175	40,843
Ancient Order of Foresters	...	...	132	37,996
Co-operative Societies	...	...	47	54,373
Trades Councils	...	...	27	77,450
Trade Unions	...	...	96	105,207
Other Economic Societies	...	...	47	23,121
Ancient Order of Buffaloes	...	...	10	4,612
Order of Druids	...	...	17	3,211
Order of Rechabites	...	...	13	737

Other members of Conference were 66, being representatives of various City and Town Councils, School Boards, and Boards of Guardians, making a total of 630 persons representing 347,550 others.

In addition to the above the membership of 14 Friendly Society branches was not supplied by the delegates representing such societies.

The Friendly Societies' representatives were drawn from

Unanimous.

the counties of Derby, Hereford, Leicester, Northampton, Notts, Oxford, Salop, Staffs, Warwick, and Worcester.

Representatives were present from the Trades Councils of Derby, Leicester, Worcester, Cheltenham, Smethwick, Northampton, Walsall, Kettering, Burton-on-Trent, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Coventry, West Bromwich, and Birmingham.

Such a vote, by such a Conference could not be explained away. Following as it did the equally unanimous vote of the six other Conferences, it indicated a social portent of the first magnitude.

The progress of the movement had brought to light a new kind of agitation. It was directed to the remedy of a great popular grievance. It was attempting a reform of dimensions that were simply colossal. Yet the initiative of hope and courage came, not from the Imperial Government, with all its resources of power and wealth, but from a small colony at the Antipodes. The response comes in the first instance from an obscure corner of the metropolis. But that response is ushered in with mysterious prognostications and accompaniments from the transcendent sphere. As it emerges into public life, the statesman seems to abdicate his functions, the sociologist takes his place. Instead of Midlothian campaigns aflame with political passion, is a series of Conferences listening to exquisite lucid University Extension Lectures on a complex social problem. The platform pugilist and the political bravo are at a discount. The expert is in demand. People show themselves actually more interested in getting things done than in "palpable hits" scored by political opponents. Even partisan chiefs find it expedient to disavow partisanship in this question. "The best men in all parties" are invited to co-operate.

Similarly, in the promotion of reform, the nucleus of organisation is not the Party caucus, but the Trades Council or the Trade Union. The professional politician recedes before the Labour leader. The philanthropist shoulders the task which the Cabinet Minister has apparently dropped in despair.

These were notable symptoms of change. Here was a new thing.

On the motion in the House of Commons on April 25th, 1899, "That a Select Committee of seventeen members be appointed to consider and report upon the best means of improving the conditions of the aged deserving poor and for providing for those of them who are helpless and infirm; and to inquire whether any of the Bills dealing with Old Age

A new kind
of agitation.

Pensions and submitted to Parliament during the present session can with advantage be adopted either with or without amendment," Mr. Asquith said, "There are many of us on this side of the House who are not satisfied with any one of the schemes yet put forward, as being either practical or adequate."

Mr. Chamberlain said he was not inclined to say that any scheme could be found which will not be practicable. The adequacy of it might be a matter of argument. He declared that the appointment of a committee would not delay dealing with the matter. He said, "What we have said again and again, and what we are prepared to say now, is that we hope and intend to deal with this matter before we leave office. . . . I express again my confident hope that before the Government goes out of office, we shall have done something which will furnish a practical scheme, the experience of which will be extremely useful in the future and will lead to the ultimate solution of the question."

This was a very definite and categorical statement of the purpose of the Government. I grieve to have to ask how far it was an accurate statement. For, admittedly the great difficulty about Old Age Pensions was the question of finance, and the intention of any Government to deal with Pensions inevitably involved the acquiescence at least of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chancellor of the Exchequer at that time—in fact, from 1895 to 1902—was the Right Hon. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, afterwards Viscount St. Aldwyn; and five years later, when the muzzle of office had been removed from his lips, the Right Hon. Sir Michael declared that in his judgment any Old Age Pensions scheme was, on grounds of finance, impossible! This remarkable utterance will be given more fully in our record of 1904.

There is seemingly a Parliamentary superstition which makes honourable and especially right honourable members chary of referring to movements in the country, and sedulously limits their references to what has come before the House or has been spoken elsewhere by members of Parliament. Mr. Lecky, free in this as in other respects from the meaningless conventions of Parliament, got up and frankly declared that "some of the best supported schemes had been those of Mr. Booth." And he went on to say that he was probably not alone in thinking that this was one of the most dangerous questions that had ever been discussed in the House. The result of Mr. Booth's scheme would be to add to the annual expenditure a sum amounting to the whole of the interest on the National Debt which had been swept away since the peace of 1815.

Government Intentions.

Mr. Lecky's testimony.

C.—THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR

CHAPTER XIV A BOOK FROM MR. BOOTH

The 1st of May (Labour Day), 1899, saw published for the first time the scheme of Old Age Pensions proposed by Mr. Booth. He had never before submitted to the public a definite demand on the subject. In 1892, indeed, he brought out a sixpenny volume of 188 pages (Macmillan) entitled "Pauperism, a Picture; and Endowment of Old Age, an Argument," which had been frequently spoken of as embodying Mr. Booth's proposals. It was, however, he was frequently at pains to explain, "an argument" and not a scheme. Again in 1894 he published a massive array of facts as to the Condition of the Aged Poor (Macmillan, 8s. 6d.). But until this book of 88 pages (Macmillan, 6d.), Mr. Booth had never committed himself to any specific scheme. He had limited himself in print and on platform to the general demand for a free pension from the State for every aged person.

Now he descended from the heights of a principle which he felt to be impregnable to the lower and more assailable levels of practical particulars. The book falls into two parts. The first, with preface, recapitulates in some thirty pages of concise and graphic statement the information given in the author's previous works on the condition of the aged poor. The second part deals with proposals. On page 44 Mr. Booth plunges into the scheme and its cost:—

"The most desirable age for a State pension is put by various authorities at 60, 65, 70 and 75. If we consider solely the usual working powers of men, 60 is now late enough in most manual industries; but some employments press less hardly, and in most cases the industrial breakdown precedes the financial breakdown by several years, so that we find 65

Age—70.

to be the age at which pauperism increases by leaps and bounds, and thus this age has been commonly chosen as representing the time 'when strength is gone and money spent and—pensions—are most excellent.' But nevertheless, for reasons which I shall by-and-by give, the age of 70 is the basis of my scheme.

Weekly Amount, 7s.

"Just as 65 has been the usually accepted age, so 5s. per week has been the usually accepted amount, though various sums from 2s. 6d. to 10s. a week have been suggested in connection with different schemes, and here again I diverge from the accepted mean and suggest 7s. The Act would provide that every one should, on attaining 70 years of age, be entitled to a pension of 7s. a week for the remainder of life. There would be provision for excluding aliens, and there are no doubt other exceptions to be made, but with these details it is unnecessary to burthen my present statement.

"The decision as to the age of the applicants should, I think, rest with the Registrars, Superintendent-Registrars, and finally, in case of need, with the Registrar-General, unless a special officer were appointed in connection with the Local Government Board for this and other purposes connected with Pension administration."

The payment, Mr. Booth urged, should be made through the Post Office, and should be drawn weekly in person.

Earlier and Smaller Pensions.

"It is an integral part of my plan that, concurrently with the establishment of pensions in old age, out-relief under the Poor Law should be abolished, except, perhaps, for a limited period in widowhood or other cases of sudden calamity. . . . But to abolish out-relief without causing hardship would be a task of some difficulty, especially for those over 60 and under 70 years of age. All those who look forward to receiving their pension at 70 would be able to secure it at an earlier age by payment of the extra cost involved, and action of this kind would be facilitated through the Post Office. Many poor cases, however, will remain, especially in regard to the poverty of to-day, which might seem mocked by the offer of assistance at 70, and whose needs might be sufficiently met with something less than 7s. a week—the cases of those who, without present help, must inevitably become paupers, but who might still retain their independence if permitted to discount their pension expectation. To meet needs of this kind, I think it might be desirable in some cases to grant pensions, reduced in amount, proportionately to the age at which payment begins.

"The conditions on which such exceptional treatment might be accorded would be equality of cost to the State, coupled

with some practical security for the independence of the recipient. From 60 to 70 is usually the time of danger, when for many of the poor the workhouse begins to loom in the distance. The cost to the State of an annuity of 2s. 6d. a week from 60, or 4s. from 65, or 7s. from 70 is approximately the same. Beyond these limits I should in no case go."

Then comes a suggestion which created not a little surprise in the ranks of Labour. They had looked forward to the absolute severance of Pensions from all connection with the Poor Law. Yet Mr. Booth said :—

" My suggestion is, that any persons who have reached 60 years of age, and whose means are diminishing so that they are in evident danger of having sooner or later to seek relief, should be entitled to lay their case before the Guardians of their parish, whose interest in the matter is evident. The Guardians, if they are themselves satisfied on the subject, would report the case as suitable for special treatment. No case should be recommended by them or accepted by the Pension Authority unless need were shown for this concession, or if an income could not be assured which, with the reduced pension, might be expected to suffice for the maintenance of a decent existence. The supplementary provision would always be most satisfactory if it took the shape of a sum of money paid into the Post Office which would serve to raise the reduced pension to a minimum of 5s. or whatever sum might be considered requisite to maintain independence."

As regards the existing paupers, Mr. Booth would allow out-paupers over 70 to claim their pensions, and those between 60 and 70 might claim for an anticipated pension of reduced amount, towards supplementing which charitable funds might very properly be applied. Indoor paupers of suitable age would be free to leave the workhouse and claim their pension. But re-entry into the workhouse would forfeit the pension to the Guardians.

The total expenditure on a universal basis would, he pointed out, be almost the same for 70 at 7s., for 65 at 4s., and for 60 at 2s. 6d.—in round numbers, about nineteen or twenty millions. To lessen the cost he proposes to reduce the woman's pension to 5s., bringing down the total to sixteen millions. By way of amends, as sixteen millions is too large a sum to add all at once to the national expenditure, he would chivalrously allow the women to be pensioned first. Seven or seven and a half millions would suffice for the women; then eight or nine millions might be added afterwards for men.

Mr. Booth did not repeat the suggestions for raising the

Supplementary
Outdoor
Relief.

Lower
Pensions to
Women.

From Taxes
and Rates.

money which he made in 1892. He held that the huge subventions that have been granted from time to time from Imperial to local treasuries might be replaced by the providing of Pensions. Three and a half millions for the women might be deducted from the subventions, and three millions needed for the men might be found in the same way. Six and a half millions would thus be thrown on the rates; but of this sum the larger part would be saved out of the Poor Law expenditure. It was no part of his task to suggest sources of revenue. It was not unreasonable to hope, both from increased yield of present taxes and from a possible check to the increase of armaments, that the necessity for further taxation may not be great.

In concluding Mr. Booth traces his universal scheme back to a pamphlet published in 1879 by Mr. R. P. Hookham, of Islip, Oxfordshire, and called "Outlines of a Scheme for Dealing with Pauperism." To Mr. Hookham, then living at the advanced age of 92, Mr. Booth "very humbly dedicates this book."

The
Originator.

CHAPTER XV

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FORMED.

The seven Conferences had been held: seven local committees had been formed: to advance the movement in their own districts and to combine in a national committee. They were composed of the following persons (* members of Executive):—

London or National Unions.—*Geo. N. Barnes (Sec. A.S.E.), London; *Margaret Bondfield (Shop Assistants), London; F. Chandler, J.P. (Sec. Carpenters and Joiners), Manchester; A. J. Collett (Clerks), London; Will Crooks (L.C.C.), Poplar; Emily Janes (National Union Women Workers); James Kidd (A.S.E.), Greenwich; John Lamb (Operative Plasterers), London; J. Maddison (Sec. Iron Founders), London; Fredk. Maddison, M.P., Wandsworth; J. Macdonald (London Trades Council); S. Masterman (Iron Founders), London; James Macpherson (Shop Assistants), London; E. T. Mendell (London Cabdrivers' Union); Councillor Millington, J.P. (Hull Trades Council); J. Sansom (Gas Workers), London; W. Stevenson (Builders' Labourers), Bermondsey; Benj. Wright (A.S.E.), London.

Northumberland and Durham.—*Thos. Burt, M.P. (Northumberland Miners), Newcastle-on-Tyne; John Johnson (Durham Miners), Durham; James Burn (A.S.E.), Sunderland; R. Knight, J.P. (Boilermakers), Newcastle; Canon Moore Ede, Gateshead-on-Tyne; *Alex. Wilkie (Sec. Shipwrights), 3, St. Nicholas Buildings, Newcastle, *Convener*.

Yorkshire.—F. W. Booth, Hull Trades Council; C. Brumpton, Mexborough Trades Council; W. T. Grimes, York Trades Council; *Councillor Chas. Hobson, J.P., Sheffield Trades Council; E. Harvey, Bradford Trades Council; Councillor Parker, Halifax Trades Council; *Councillor O. Connellan, 3, Faith Street, Leeds (Leeds Trades Council), *Convener*.

Lancashire.—*Lancashire Federation of Trades Councils.*—E. Burne, Ashton-under-Lyme; J. R. Clynes, Oldham; J. Chapman, Radcliffe; J. Fielding, Rochdale; A. H. Gill,

Its personnel.

Bolton; W. Harrocks, Bury; J. R. Lomas, Farnworth; *J. Markham, Burnley; *G. D. Kelley, J.P., 63, Upper Brooke Street, Manchester, *Convener*.

West of England and South Wales.—Councillor W. Baster, Bristol; F. Freeman (O.S.M.), Bristol; E. H. Jarvis, Pres. Labour Electoral Association, Bristol; W. R. Oxley, Bristol; J. Pearson, Bristol Trades Council; Councillor Sharland (A.S.E.), Bristol; F. Sheppard (National Federation Trades Councils), Bristol; S. H. Whitehouse (Somerset Miners), Radstock; *Councillor J. Curle, J.P., 17, Oxford Street, Totterdown, Bristol, *Convener*.

Scotland.—James Boyd (Free Gardeners), Glasgow; John Cronin (Steel and Iron Workers), Glasgow; A. Catto, Aberdeen Trades Council; *J. A. Glen, Glasgow Co-operative Conference; George Galloway, Glasgow Trades Council; *Isaac Mitchell (A.S.E.), 9, Murray Street, Maryhill, Glasgow, *Convener*.

The Midlands.—*Edward Cadbury, Birmingham; W. Cope, Birmingham. *Arthur Eades, Birmingham Trades Council; *Allan Granger (Typographical Association), Birmingham; *Councillor J. Holmes (Hosiery Federation), Leicester; *Councillor S. Hudson (Foresters), Leicester; *Councillor R. S. Milner, Leek; *Albert Stanley (Miners), Cannock; *Councillor J. V. Stevens, Birmingham; Councillor J. Taylor (Midland Trades Federation), Dudley; *Robert Waite, 20, Park Hill Road, Harborne, *Convener*.

The first meeting of the national committee so formed was held at Browning Hall on the 9th of May—two days, as it happened, after Robert Browning's birthday. There were present fourteen members of the London committee, one from Northumberland and Durham, five from Yorkshire, four from Lancashire, one from the West of England, two from Scotland, and eleven from the Midlands. Mr. Charles Booth and his son, Mr. George Booth, were there; and Mrs. Booth was good enough to come and take tea with the company before the deliberations began. Entirely one with her husband in the movement, Mrs. Booth had previously been prevented by ill-health from attending any of the Conferences. With the more pleasure was she welcomed now.

Constituted
May 9, 1899.

Title.

The full style and title of the new body, as entered in its minute book, ran to formidable extent: "The National Committee of Organized Labour (Trade Unions, Trade Councils, Federations of these bodies, Friendly Societies, and Co-operative Societies) on Old Age Pensions, based on the Principle that every old person on attaining a given age should be entitled to receive a free Pension from the



EDWARD CADBURY,
Treasurer to the National Pensions Committee.

State; and charged with the Instruction to promote the legal enactment of this Principle." It became more generally known as the National Committee of Organized Labour on Old Age Pensions, or, more shortly still, the National Pensions Committee.

This body at its first meeting constituted itself a permanent committee, with power to add to its number representatives of new districts as they should hereafter be formed. It chose as its chairman Councillor J. V. Stevens, of Birmingham; Mr. Edward Cadbury as Hon. Treasurer; Mr. Robert Waite, who had so splendidly organized the Birmingham Conference, and myself as Hon. Secretaries. Officers.

Mr. Booth had, with characteristic generosity, provided each member with advance copies of his book, and the principal proposals therein contained were submitted *seriatim* for discussion. Already several of these were known to be by no means accepted by some of the most prominent Labour leaders present, and a delicate, even painful situation was apprehended.

Two minor points were first agreed to: that the Pensions Officer should be the Registrar of Births and Deaths; and that payment be made through the Post Office.

It was on the question of age limit that cleavage first showed itself. Mr. Booth had suggested 70. Sixty-five was proposed: then an amendment of 60. The deep personal concern shown by the Labour men on finding themselves in serious disagreement with Mr. Booth was a crucial evidence of the intense admiration and reverent affection they felt towards him. It found a noble counterpart in the magnanimity of Mr. Booth. There was something pathetic in the inquiry addressed to him as to the effect that their dissent from his recommendations might have upon his relation to the movement. He cheerily replied, that would be no reason for his parting company with them. The vote was then taken: and as the matter has been much discussed in the Labour world the figures should be given. For 60 as the age limit, 15; against, 17. The resolution fixing 65 was then put, and carried *nem. con.*

The amount of the pension to be demanded was next fixed. The suggestion in Mr. Booth's book that men should have 7/- a week and women 5/- was not adopted. There was a unanimous vote for 5/- a week for men equally with women. The Pension Fund it was agreed should be derived from the general taxes. The committee decided not to connect Pensions with any particular form of taxation. The weekly amount.

Mr. Booth's scheme: agreements and differences.

An Executive was then chosen, consisting of those to whose names an asterisk is affixed in the foregoing list.

**A paid
Secretary.**

A letter from Mr. George Cadbury was read in which he said, "I presume there must be a paid secretary if the organization is to accomplish its work. . . . I will gladly unite with others by giving £50 a year."

Mr. Booth intimated that as the committee had not endorsed his specific proposals as to age and amount of pension, he could with the more readiness promise to contribute to the expenses of the organization. (£50 a year was the figure named later.) At the same time he expressed his belief that when members had given fuller consideration to his proposals, they would come round to his way of thinking.

**Divergence
from
Mr. Booth.**

So the National Committee came into distinct existence. In the things wherein it differed from Mr. Booth, it had vindicated its own independence of judgment. It had at the same time paid him the sincerest compliment in its power. It was so entirely convinced of the truth and justice of Mr. Booth's principles that it would tolerate no compromise or deviation from them, even though proposed by Mr. Booth himself. Therefore it abjured any and every connection between Pensions and Poor Law. Therefore it insisted on absolute equality between men and women as pensioners. And, as the Act of 1908 has proved, the National Committee has on these distinctive points won the nation to its will.

**Adviser-in-
General.**

Mr. Booth was pressed to assume the presidency of the new organization, but he declined, urging that a recognized Labour leader should be head of a committee of organized Labour. But at the same time he promised to do anything he could to further the success of our movement. That promise has been magnificently fulfilled. The National Committee resolved from the first to avail itself of his guidance, to keep in close touch with him, and to consult him before publishing any printed matter. Even where opinions diverged, mutual respect was mostly deepened by the divergence. Amid the distractions of many other absorbing pursuits, aggravated too often by the claims of illhealth, Mr. Booth has never failed all these ten years to respond to our appeal for advice. He has been to the movement throughout much more than guide, philosopher, and friend,

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIRST TRUMPET BLAST OF ORGANIZED RELIGION

The change in legislative opinion from the appearance of the Report of Lord Rothschild's Committee to the formation of the National Committee was like a change of climate from arctic to tropical. The Government was pledged to legislate on the question before leaving office, and that term was rapidly arriving. The Government had appointed Mr. Chaplin's Committee, but was now so eager to provide pensions that it did not bind itself to wait for that Committee's report. The earliest date on which Mr. Chamberlain said the Government could bring in a measure was next session. In one or two years, therefore, legislation was expected.

Change of political temperature.

So no time was to be lost by the National Committee in ensuring that the expected legislation should be on the lines approved by organized Labour.

Three days after the Committee was constituted, I induced the Congregational Union of England and Wales, then in session at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, to consider the following resolution, which I moved :—

The Congregational Union.

“ That this Assembly, remembering the solemn charges of the Christ to His followers concerning their duty to the poor, and observing the widespread demand which is being made for Old Age Pensions, hereby affirms its conviction that it is the duty of all Christian citizens to endeavour to secure more honourable provision than is now made, for the support of the aged poor.”

There is one passage in the speech of my seconder, Rev. E. Griffith Jones, B.A., which may well be quoted here. He said : “ It seems to me that this question has very suddenly and very marvellously come into the open. The Labour leaders are almost as much surprised at the way the matter has shaped itself out during these Conferences as anybody outside. They have looked on each other with a sort of

amazement to find each other in line on the matter." The resolution was carried unanimously.

"Pensions for All" at 1d.

Mr. Booth, with generosity and magnanimity combined, brought out at the price of 1d. a condensed issue of his "Argument," carefully excluding the parts in which he differed from the National Committee, while adding a list of its members and the text of its constitutive resolution. Of these pamphlets, entitled "Pensions for all in Old Age," he presented several thousands for distribution by the Committee. This is only one illustration out of a great number which might be adduced of the munificence of Mr. Booth's authorship. His works have been given to the public, with a princely disregard of pecuniary reimbursement.

The small arms ammunition of a campaign is the leaflet. And the first of a large succession of leaflets, entitled "The Case Briefly Stated," was composed by Mr. George Barnes, who from first to last has been one of the most resolute and persistent promoters of the cause. One hundred thousand copies were struck off. Five thousand copies of a verbatim report of the proceedings of the Birmingham Conference were presented by Mr. George Cadbury, and freely dissipated.

The organized Labour of Great Britain forms a permanent network of communication all over the land: and full use was made of this widespread agency for distributing as cheaply, as swiftly and as effectively as possible our printed matter.

A yet more efficient means of education was supplied by the leading *personnel* of these Unions. Almost every man of them was more or less habituated to public speech and in demand on platforms of every kind. The opportunities they had for talking about Pensions in public and in private were almost innumerable. And they used them: with striking effect.

We somewhat defiantly headed our notepaper:—

"A FREE STATE PENSION FOR EVERYONE ON REACHING 65 YEARS OF AGE.
NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ORGANISED LABOUR
APPOINTED AT THE SEVEN CONFERENCE OF MR. CHARLES BOOTH, WITH
REPRESENTATIVES
OF TRADE UNIONS, FRIENDLY SOCIETIES AND CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES"

with the names of all our Committee attached.

Headquarters at Browning Hall.

The use of the Warden's room at Browning Hall was offered by the Settlement and accepted by the Executive, as the office of the National Committee. Browning Hall, which had been the cradle, became the headquarters of the movement. To quote my friend Mr. Rogers, "The birth of the

Old Age Pensions movement here recalls a phrase of Hawthorne's—' There is sometimes a quaint and peculiar fitness in what are called the accidents of life.' For it was Robert Browning who wrote, with magnificent optimism :—

“ Grow old along with me !

The best is yet to be.

The last of life, for which the first was made ” ;

and who claimed that age ought to be, and might be, the finest part of life if the life has been worth anything, because it contains the summing up of life's experience.”

Propaganda went on “ full steam ahead.”

A type not
easily found.

CHAPTER XVII

AN IDEAL SECRETARY

One of the most urgent of all needs was to find the right man for our paid secretaryship. This threatened to be no easy task. For, as we have seen, the National Committee was a new thing. It was a synthesis of representatives of all schools and parties and churches. It was political, yet non-partisan. It was not the least common denominator: it was the greatest common multiple. It stood for the largest social reform now before the nation. A man broad enough and big enough and genial enough to carry on the work would be one in a million.

Mr. Frederick Maddison, Mr. Barnes, Miss Bondfield, and I were appointed to find him. We met one beautiful summer evening on the terrace of the House of Commons. I had to report that I had written all round to friends likely to advise, but in vain. Several names were, however, suggested. Then Mr. Maddison proposed Mr. Frederick Rogers.

I heard with a leap of the heart.

Here indeed was the man.

The very
man.

I had known Mr. Rogers then for about three years. He was president of the Vellum Binders when I first met him: and he had impressed me as an ideal Labour leader. He had frequently spoken to the men at Browning Hall: and his addresses had revealed a breadth of sympathy combined with a depth of conviction that was rare indeed. He was genial, eloquent, persuasive; and his speech was ever the speech of a high-souled man. He kept on surprising one with the variety of his qualities. He was a man of affairs, and also a man of letters. He was keenly interested in all social questions, yet had kept himself aloof from entanglements of Party. He was modern to the finger-tips, yet responded to the charm of antiquity with the enthusiasm of an archæologist. He was a pioneer of the University Extension movement. He was a passionate student of Elizabethan literature, had become in it a specialist, and University men were glad to sit at his feet as he lectured on his chosen theme. But



Printed by Elliott & Fry.
FREDERICK ROGERS,
Organising Secretary to the National Pensions Committee.

deepest of all was the religious impulse. Son of a beautifully devout Baptist mother, much influenced in his youth by Allanson Picton and Dean Stanley, he had, after wide wandering in the wilderness of speculation, come to rest under Father Stanton's guidance in the Anglo-Catholic fold. I had found about him many suggestions of the encyclopædic range of sympathy centring in religion which makes the theologian. Every now and again in hearing him one came on the deep theological instinct. His stern stress on sin separated him at once from the crowd of shallow theorizers who fancy that a film of optimistic vaseline spread over the surface with fine verbal dexterity will heal the social cancer below. With sympathies so wide and various, Mr. Rogers showed himself at home in every circle. Hyde Park demonstration, Conciliation Board, workmen's club, Trade Union, journalistic set, University common room, Deanery drawing-room, monastic retreat—place him where you would, Frederick Rogers was always his own genial self, ready to give and receive of the best available. Possessed of a rare genius of friendship, he had a positive fascination for young men, to whom he was father and confessor and brother in one.

His deepest self.

Synthesis personified.

And this man, so exceptionally endowed and trained, was willing and free to become our secretary !

Here was another confirmation of the Purpose that had initiated our movement. Had we searched through the whole Labour world as known to us—and I speak now after ten years more experience—we could not have found another man who so precisely fitted the new post, with all its exacting niches. And just when he was needed, he was there, ready to step in at once.

Nomination, we all agreed, was election.

One of the most essential conditions was that the secretary be a person acceptable to all sections of the Labour world. He had to maintain and extend the remarkable union of Labour forces which signalized our movement. This condition was entirely fulfilled. "They all speak well of Rogers," said one. "Even the Socialists," said another, "haven't a word to say against him."

When the Executive Committee met at Birmingham on July 8th, the result was a foregone conclusion. The only question was the period of his engagement. Some sanguine souls thought he might be needed only seven months ! The Executive as a whole thought two years would be nearer the mark. Finally he was unanimously appointed for a year, the engagement being annually renewable.

Election.

A memorandum of what Mr. Rogers had already achieved

was first submitted to the Executive, and may here be given, in the fuller detail supplied by later knowledge.

His life-story.

Frederick Rogers was born in Whitechapel in 1846. He commenced work as an errand boy to an ironmonger at 2s. a week. From childhood he suffered much from spinal disease. This ailment was aggravated by the heavy loads that he had to carry as an errand boy. They were often as much as he could stagger under. So serious was the spinal trouble that he was not expected to survive. One medical man after another was consulted, but their treatment brought no improvement. At last, when about sixteen years of age, young Rogers heard from a neighbour who had been cured of some bone disease, of the doctor who had treated her, Dr. John Watkins by name, a cultured physician living in Falcon Square. Rogers went to him, and the new treatment proved gradually successful. The old man used to talk freely to the lad. One day the doctor said that his eyes were somewhat failing, would young Rogers come and read to him? So on Sunday mornings for four years Rogers made return to his benefactor by reading aloud to him. He read him the church newspapers, notably *The Rock*, and that paper's denunciation of James Allanson Picton led to Rogers going to hear the vilified preacher and to being profoundly impressed by him. He also read Dr. Watkins the Prayer Book, and Dr. Watkins turned the youth's attention to its beautiful English. So began Mr. Rogers's devotion to Elizabethan literature, the study of which has been his literary speciality. Meantime Rogers had left ironmongery, and had begun to learn the trade of vellum-binding. This he has regarded throughout more as an art than as a craft. To this day he has something of the same pleasure in handling a well and beautifully bound volume as he has in inspecting a painting by one of the old masters. But, as a friend once remarked, it was not long before he devoted his attention to the insides as well as the outsides of books. Reading was not then catered for as now by free libraries at every corner. Mr. Rogers once told his hearers at Browning Hall how vividly he remembered the first day that the Guildhall Library was opened to the public, and how eagerly he availed himself of the opportunity of entering. He selected as one of his first volumes Browning's "Paracelsus," and was entirely lost to all sense of his surroundings until the warning bell roused him to the unpleasant consciousness that he must leave the building. He joined the Vellum Binders' Trade Union in 1872, and became an officer next year. In 1873 he joined the Stationers' Friendly Society, where again in a year he was elected officer. He was a

member of a School Board Management Committee which had charge of four schools in Bethnal Green, and remained a manager from 1872 to 1878. His connection with the working men's club movement, which he supported with great energy, led to his coming into touch with the late Dean Stanley, and, along with other workmen, he used to be invited to the Westminster Deanery. From 1877 to 1880 he was president of the East London Workmen's Club. When the University Extension movement was mooted, Mr. Rogers was one of its first and most ardent supporters. He joined the East London University Extension Society in 1877. Of that committee Rev. S. A. Barnett was chairman, Leonard Montefiore was secretary, and in the following year Mr. Rogers became joint secretary with Alfred Milner, afterwards Lord Milner. In 1885 Mr. Rogers relinquished the secretaryship and became vice-chairman. It should be remembered that out of this society grew Toynbee Hall. In 1882 he entered the Co-operative movement, and in 1885 assisted in founding the Co-operative Bookbinders' Society in Bloomsbury. Mr. Rogers has thus had intimate acquaintance from the inside of the three great groups of organized Labour—the Trade Union, the Friendly Society, and the Co-operative Society. During these years Mr. Rogers became widely known as an acceptable lecturer. He also began to write for the Press. The first payment he received for any article was for one in the *Pall Mall Gazette* when Mr. W. T. Stead was editing it, in 1884. During 1884 to 1886 he contributed many articles on Labour questions to the *Weekly Dispatch*, when Mr. Fox Bourne was editor, over the signature of "An Artisan." In one of these papers, written in 1885, Mr. Rogers drafted a scheme for the formation of a Labour Party in the House of Commons. This is said to be the first scheme of the kind propounded by an English workman. He also wrote a series of papers on education in the *Weekly Dispatch* in the years 1887-8. He has in his time written for many magazines, and often articles of a lighter character, such as short stories. In 1886 he became vice-president of the Elizabethan Society, and conducted a class of young men at Toynbee Hall who were engaged in studying English literature.

In 1888 he declined a lucrative appointment as lecturer for the then newly-formed Unionist Party. It was well for the life-work that waited for him that he did thus retain his freedom from Party connections. He accepted instead the post of journeyman binder at the London branch of the Co-operative Printing Society, and held that position for two years, when he became foreman, only relinquishing that

University extensionist.

On press and platform.

An "Elizabethan"

position to assume the office of secretary to the National Pensions Committee. His relation to the Co-operative movement was much more than that of a salaried official. He has spoken and lectured in the interests of Co-operation all over the South of England. In 1888 Mr. Rogers gave practical vent to his Elizabethan enthusiasm by taking the lead in an agitation for the erection of the Marlowe Memorial at Canterbury. Of the committee formed for this purpose Mr. Rogers was secretary, Lord Coleridge was chairman, and Mr. Sidney Lee was treasurer. The Memorial was eventually unveiled in September, 1892, by Sir Henry Irving. Rogers knew Coleridge and Irving very well; and Mr. Sidney Lee and he have been friends since they met in their youth. The shilling Browning published by Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co. was the outcome of an agitation started by the Elizabethans at Toynbee Hall. The first two signatures of the petition to Robert Barrett Browning for this publication were those of Canon Barnett and Mr. Rogers. Mr. Rogers was also chairman of the committee which arranged for the enriching of St. Saviour's Church, Southwark, in 1896, with a memorial window to Philip Massinger.

His first visit to the Trade Union Congress was in 1892, when he went as delegate of the Vellum Binders. Next year occurred the great strike of bookbinders (1891-2). His own trade, the vellum-binding, being the smallest section, was very hard hit. In 1881 Mr. Rogers was elected to the presidency of their Union, and held it for six years. When he entered this office the Union was all but bankrupt, and two-thirds of its members were out of work. Almost alone, he waged a Press warfare against the Government monopoly of thirty years' standing, and finally, by arranging for questions in the House of Commons and by deputations to Ministers, broke down the monopoly. Before he had been president two years all members of his Union were at work, and the Union has prospered ever since. In 1895 the Trade Union Congress at Cardiff adopted the policy which excluded from the Congress all save actual working members of a trade or officials of Trade Unions. This led to a vigorous controversy between Mr. Rogers and Mr. John Burns in the columns of the *Daily Chronicle*. As may be imagined, Mr. Burns's expression of opinion did not lack vehemence or pungency. But, happily, the result of the quarrel between these two Labour leaders was that they became fast friends.

As one glances back over this full and varied career, one sees that no piece of public work to which Mr. Rogers has put his hand had attained other than satisfactory progress or a successful conclusion.



GEORGE CADBURY.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

The Sunday following Mr. Rogers's appointment I spent as guest of the Cadburys. In the morning I visited the Adult School, of which Mr. George Cadbury was head. It was interesting to see the men who week by week came under the influence of that many-sided saint, whose devotion to the Son of Man is felt in every movement of social reform. With the Cadburys.

At the close he introduced me to the school in words too generous for me to repeat—save in part, and in that part only as showing how our movement hitherto had impressed itself on his judgment. But for these Conferences, he perceived, the Government would never have reopened the question of Pensions. He put this conviction in a personal way that more than startled me. He introduced me as the man who had brought the strongest Government of modern times to its knees!

I was crushed and humiliated: who could be otherwise under the circumstances? Yet I was inly glad that the Power which had deigned to use me was felt and owned. I could only turn to the great words of Paul, and read as lesson, “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.” Then I spoke of the Adult Schools and of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings as two phases and suggestions of that vast Labour Movement in Religion to which the future belonged. “To confound the things that are mighty.”

On reaching home after service, Mr. Cadbury and I talked over the origins of the movement which had expressed itself in the Tsar's appeal for a reduction of armaments, and went on to speak in general of the initiative that comes through prayer. Then the conversation reverted to Pensions. Our Executive, I may say, had expressed a desire that, somehow or other, Mr. Chamberlain should be approached and made

The telephone from Headquarters.

to feel the volume and force of the purpose that animated the Labour world in the direction of Old Age Pensions for All. It was felt that if he only knew the backing which the Government would receive from the working classes if it proceeded to legislate as they desired, we should not have long to wait for an Old Age Pensions Act.

A startling suggestion.

Suddenly Mr. Cadbury turned to me and said, "Mr. Chamberlain is at Highbury to-day. Shall I drive you over to see him and put the case to him?"

I was naturally taken aback. "I am afraid," I said, "that—if I may exercise my ordinary reason in the matter—a Stead would hardly be a *persona grata* at Highbury: I am afraid that my name would scarcely make Mr. Chamberlain look with more favour on the idea of immediate Pensions legislation. But," I continued, "you are at the Telephone in this matter, not I. If you feel I ought to go, if you have orders to that effect, I will go, whatever one's carnal reason may say to the contrary."

The very suddenness of the challenge had startled me.

Mr. Cadbury's reply reassured me. He was not, he said, conscious of any Imperative in the direction indicated. So the matter dropped.

But the thought has often recurred to me since: what might have been if we had gone.

Supposing.

Supposing Mr. Chamberlain had been as much impressed as other men by the story of our Conferences. Supposing he had been made to feel that if he at once introduced a bold instalment of Universal Pensions he would have the solid and enthusiastic support of the entire Labour world. Supposing this conviction had diverted his attention homewards from the internal affairs of the Transvaal. Supposing it had absorbed him in immediate legislation on behalf of the aged.

What might not have happened?

Would there have been no South African War?

Would the first Pensions Act have been dated 1900?

Would the poor old folks have been saved eight or nine years' addition to their misery?

These speculations belong to the nebulous region of what might have been.

In the real world, the stubborn facts remain.

Mr. Chamberlain was not drawn off the South African trail. The claims of the Outlanders abroad were not postponed to the interests of the old folks at home.

War came.

And as a consequence Pensions were put off for many weary years.

At whose door?

It is not part of my purpose to discuss here at whose door the crime of the South African War must be laid.

Suffice it to say that whoever were responsible, they have to answer not merely for vast destruction of life and wealth in South Africa, but also for the prolongation of the sufferings of more than a million aged men and women in the British Isles.

CHAPTER XIX

BY-PRODUCTS OF THE MOVEMENT

Hints to Helpers.

As yet the warecloud had not burst. The National Committee went gaily to work, sanguine of early legislative results. Mr. Rogers sent circulars to every accessible body in the Trade Union, Co-operative or Friendly Society groups, inviting affiliation and subscription. Association with any political parties was precluded by our constitution. And as agitation in this country did usually proceed along Party channels, our method of propaganda needed to be made explicit. I accordingly drew up a leaflet entitled "Hints for a Helper," of which 5,000 copies were printed. The most important suggestions may here be placed on record as a sign of the new order of working :—

How to Begin. "First of all get to know what is being done to push the Pensions movement in your Trade Union, Friendly Society, Co-operative Society, and in your district. Our organizing secretary, if you write to him, will be glad to give you this information, and to put you in touch with friends of the movement in your circle or neighbourhood. Then begin with organized Labour. In your own Trade Union, local or district, warmly support any resolution enforcing our demand which may come from the headquarters of the Union; and to any inquiry as to local opinion which may be sent from headquarters, see that an answer can be returned in favour of our demand.

"If the first step has not been thus suggested, take the initiative yourself. See that every member of your branch Union has a copy of our leaflet, 'The Case Briefly Stated.' Quantities of this leaflet will be sent free—carriage forward—by our organizing secretary for purposes of distribution. Get members to buy a copy of the penny pamphlet by Mr. Charles Booth, entitled "Pensions for All in Old Age." Of this, and of other printed matter which the National Committee may issue from time to time, our organizing secretary will supply copies as required.

“ Personally approach every official and every member of much influence, and especially everyone likely to misunderstand or oppose the movement. Ply them with printed matter and personal persuasion. Saturate the membership and the official circle with the idea. Then if, as our experience leads us to expect, the general feeling is favourable, submit to a regular meeting our circular inviting affiliation, and move a resolution approving the demand of the National Committee and deciding to affiliate. See that this resolution, if carried, is forwarded to our organizing secretary, to the local press, to the local Trades Council, to the local Members of Parliament, and to the secretary of your national Union.

“ In your Friendly Society take similar steps, so far as its constitution allows.

“ So with your Co-operative Society.

“ To win over the Trades Council of the neighbourhood, see the secretary, president, and other leading officials personally. Talk over the question with them; leave them plenty of printed matter.

“ You will now have formed a local knot of members of Trade, Friendly, and Co-operative Societies who are ready to act together in furtherance of our movement. A local knot.

“ Approach public bodies. Get to know whether the local Board of Guardians has voted on the Pensions question. If you think the Board likely to yield a strong vote in our favour, get an able Guardian to move your resolution.

“ Wait upon the editors of the most influential newspapers of any party. Meet them privately as men to men. Lay on their consciences the sad plight of the more than a million aged poor.

“ Invoke religious bodies. In the name of the poor and them that labour and are heavy laden, wait upon ecclesiastical leaders such as the chief local dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church, of the Church of England, and of the dissenting bodies. Wait also on the most numerously attended and the most influential preachers of any persuasion, and ask them to direct the attention of their congregations to the duty of making better national provision for the aged. Wait in the same way upon every important religious gathering, such as the Diocesan Council and the Free Church Council. If the Church Congress or other denominational union should meet in your neighbourhood, approach them where possible through friends of our movement belonging to the denomination. Work through the local P.S.A. federation, and the association of Adult Schools, to secure expressions of sympathy with our demand. These meetings of religious bodies,

Appeal to
piety.

if you cannot get them to endorse our principle, can hardly refuse to pass such a resolution as that which was unanimously adopted by the Congregational Union of England and Wales in May, 1899. Take care that such a vote is made known widely.

No party!

“Caution ! Keep yourself carefully from entangling alliances with any political parties. Our demand is not a partisan one. It is supported by men of different parties, and our movement must be colour-blind to party distinctions. Our appeal is to ‘good men in all parties.’

“So long as this is clearly understood there can be no harm in plying local M.P.’s and Parliamentary candidates with questions, arguments, and information ; or in approaching local party leaders ; or in addressing party meetings.

“Get up local facts. Collect all useful information on the problem of Old Age in your neighbourhood.

“Whenever you begin to feel tired of working for this movement, just think what you would do to save one poor old friend, your father or mother maybe, from the shame of the workhouse, from the inquisition of Bumble, or the ignominy of private ‘charity.’ You would not mind putting yourself seriously about for the sake of that one person. Then remember that in this movement you are working to save not one, but at the least one million old men and women from such a fate.”

So the Labour world and the religious world were being steadily permeated with our arguments and demands.

**Report on
“The Aged
Deserving
Poor.”**

With commendable despatch, on July 26th, 1899, three months after its appointment, the Select Committee on the “Aged Deserving Poor” presented its Report. The gist of its recommendations were to the effect that “it is practicable to create a workable system of Pensions for the United Kingdom” and “that the attempt should be made.” It offered a system of its own. It would elect in every Poor Law Union a Pension Authority appointed by the Guardians and for the most part composed of Guardians. It would entitle to a pension any person (man or woman) who satisfies the Pension Authority that he (1) is a British subject ; (2) is 65 years of age ; (3) has not within the last twenty years been convicted of an offence and sentenced to penal servitude or imprisonment without the option of a fine ; (4) had not received poor relief other than medical relief, unless under circumstances of a wholly exceptional character, during twenty years prior to the application for a pension ; (5) is resident within the district of the Pension Authority ; (6) has not an income from any source of more than ten shillings a week ; and (7) has

Seven meshes.

endeavoured to the best of his ability, by his industry, or by the exercise of reasonable providence, to make provision for himself and those immediately dependent on him. The amount of the pension would be not less than 5s. and not more than 7s. a week, to be determined by the Pension Authority according to the local cost of living. The pension would be paid through the Post Office. The cost should be defrayed from the common fund of the Union, and an Imperial contribution not exceeding half the total amount. The Report was eagerly bought up within a few hours of publication, and two fresh editions had soon to be printed.

Its general relation to our movement was expressed in the following memorandum adopted by the Executive on September 23rd :—

Views of
National
Committee.

“ We welcome the appearance of this Report as a gratifying sign of the progress which has been made on the Pensions question during the last twelve months. A year ago Lord Rothschild’s Committee reported against all Pension schemes submitted to it, and the Government seemed to acquiesce in this negative finding. This year Mr. Chaplin’s Committee declares Old Age Pensions practicable, recommends that an attempt should be made to introduce them, and actually propounds a scheme for their adoption. Treasury experts are, consequently, investigating its financial feasibility. This remarkable change is, in the judgment of the Executive, to be attributed principally to two causes—the one direct, the other indirect. The indirect cause is the Workmen’s Compensation Act, which has brought about, or threatens to bring about, the much earlier superannuation of large numbers of workmen. The direct cause is the action taken by the working classes themselves, which appeared in the Seven Conferences held with Mr. Charles Booth during last winter, and which has resulted in the formation of the National Committee of Organised Labour. A great stride forward has been taken towards our goal; at the same time the recommendations fall far short of what the situation requires. We object at the outset to the title ‘deserving.’ To distinguish between ‘desert’ and ‘ill-desert’ in such a matter, except in the most arbitrary manner, is beyond the competence of State functionaries; and ‘desert’ is ill-rewarded by being forced to expose its misery to the gaze of Poor Law inquisitors. We oppose the formation of local Pension Authorities as a costly, clumsy and unnecessary piece of administrative machinery. We object to its close connection in origin and *personnel* with the Poor Law Guardians. We object to the proposed inquiry into ‘desert.’ ”

We insist on the severance between Old Age Pensions and Poor Law administration being as complete as possible. We oppose the limitations based on income as well as those based on 'desert.' To refuse a pension to all persons in receipt of 10s. a week from other sources is to discourage thrift after 9s. 11d. has been secured. This proviso shows a ludicrous lack of thorough thinking. The difficulties in which the proposals are involved only throw into greater clearness the simplicity, justice, and feasibility of our demand for a free State pension for everyone on attaining a given age."

At the Trade Union Congress.

Resolution.

So far as the working classes of the country were concerned, the Report of Mr. Chaplin's Committee fell dead from the press. This was shown at the Trade Union Congress held at Plymouth in September. It was the first gathering of the Parliament of Labour since our movement had begun. It revealed a new spirit which had come over the Labour world.

Pensions were prominently to the fore. Resolutions embodying the demand formulated by our Committee had been sent up by Burnley weavers, London barge-builders, and builders' labourers. The resolution actually moved by Mr. Steadman, M.P., and seconded by Mr. Stevenson, ran as follows:—

"That in the opinion of this Congress no scheme dealing with Old Age Pensions will be satisfactory to the whole of the workers in this country which makes it a condition of thrift or disregards the inability of a large proportion of the industrious and deserving poor to make provision for the future: that the age limit be 60 years of age or, in the event of a person becoming incapacitated from following his or her employment, the same to take effect from the time he or she became incapacitated; and that the Parliamentary Committee take such steps to make this question one of such prominence as to become one of the most pressing subjects at the next Parliamentary Election."

The motion was carried with absolute unanimity, not a hand in all the crowded benches of the Congress being held up against it.

That was an experience which has been repeated at every Trade Union Congress from that day to this. The wonder of the unanimity soon passed. The Pensions resolution became a "hardy annual," the voting for which grew to be almost mechanical. The age limit on which the Congress insisted was five years lower than we had, as a matter of compromise, agreed upon; but about the main principle there has never been an iota of difference of opinion since Mr. Booth came to Browning Hall.

Needless to say that Mr. Rogers was everywhere at the Congresses, and our printed matter was in everyone's hands.

The Plymouth Congress of 1899 is memorable for another and pregnant proof which it offered of the unitive trend which our movement had evoked in British Labour. In July, 1898, as I have earlier remarked, the British Labour world was a heap of warring fragments. The break-up of the International Labour Congress painfully illustrated its divided condition.

In December, 1898, our series of Conferences began. To the great surprise at first of those participating, these Conferences brought together representatives of all the previously antagonistic sections of the Trade Union group: went further, and combined, although in unequal proportions, the three groups—Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, and Friendly Societies, which had not been before united; and elicited from the combination so formed a complete unanimity: a unanimity which was not merely a unity of opinion but a unity of purpose. And the men who had so come together were leaders in their several connections.

It is pleasant to remember that, after the chaos of July, 1898, the Labour world first drew together, not in order to protect its own organized interests, not to maintain any ism or speculative doctrine of society, but to enforce a great humanitarian demand. It is interesting to observe that just as the religious world was being split into angry fragments over the children, the old folks were uniting the industrial world.

But the agreement thus precipitated on one point could not fail to extend to others. Having come from all sections and groups of Labour, having stood together on the Pensions platform, having moreover by their unanimity "brought to its knees the strongest Government of modern times" and re-opened the whole question of State support for the aged, Labour leaders naturally felt the pleasure and power of cohesion: could not easily maintain the old separateness, and came to aspire after a new synthesis.

So at Plymouth the resolution was carried—

"That this Congress, having regard to its decisions in former years, and with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee of all the Co-operative, Socialist, Trade Unions, and other working organizations to jointly co-operate on lines mutually agreed upon, in convening a special congress of representatives from such of the above-named organizations as may be willing to

How the
Labour world
solidified.

Genesis of the
L.R.C.

84 HOW OLD AGE PENSIONS BEGAN TO BE

take part, to devise ways and means for securing the return of an increased number of Labour Members to the next Parliament."

As everyone now knows, this was the beginning of the Labour Party.

CHAPTER XX

ROMAN CARDINAL AND ANGLICAN CONGRESS

Next to the forces of organized Labour in the order of our friendly attack stood the forces of organized Religion. The Congregational Union had already declared itself. The Wesleyan Conference was approached, also the Baptist Union. The more compactly unified churches were found more easy to reach.

At the Catholic Congress at the end of July, Cardinal Vaughan had spoken in a vein that recalled the leading utterances of his great predecessor, Cardinal Manning. Dr. Vaughan described the workhouse as now the national refuge for the poor, but observed that the poor feel dis-honoured in accepting this change offered them for the lands and houses of which they indirectly were robbed in the sixteenth century. He then went on to say—and his words are worthy to be put on lasting record—"They hoped that the Old Age Pension scheme might bring at least some remedy for this state of things, but it would depend upon the Pensions being sufficient to keep its recipient in frugal comfort. The well-to-do were afraid of its cost, but surely the rich were bound to tax themselves, or to be taxed, for their poorer brethren. He was always at a loss to understand why the colossal incomes should not be taxed at a higher rate than say the net average income of the upper classes. It was fitting that surplus and extravagance should be more heavily taxed than ordinary and legitimate expenditure."

As might be expected, after this utterance we had no difficulty in securing a hearing at the Archbishop's House, Westminster.

I had had an audience of the Cardinal four years previously. I had brought before him the proposal that Catholic priests should be permitted to join with Anglicans and Nonconformists in meetings called to express the desire "that they may all be one." His Eminence cordially approved the idea. Coming now, on September 30th, to

Organized Religion.

The Cardinal's strong plea.

To a
deputation
from labour.

The people
being "used
up."

Promised
Support.

give a more practical expression of the same purpose, I was grieved to notice how shrunken and physically feeble was the man before us, in comparison with the stalwart and commanding figure I had first met. I had the pleasure of introducing a deputation of ten leading members of our committee. We were very graciously received, and after Mr. Rogers, Mr. Barnes, and Mr. Mitchell had spoken, the Cardinal replied in sympathetic terms. He said he "wanted a good deal of converting" before he could accept Mr. Booth's proposals. He suggested a pension of 7/- or 10/- to every poor person in need of assistance who applied at the workhouse. In any case, he said he felt more strongly than he could say the obligation to unite with his working brethren, and to assist them by every means available to make their lives brighter and happier, to give them more time for themselves, for the cultivation of their minds and the practice of their religion; and especially to withdraw from them that horrible nightmare of sorrow and of suffering in old age coming from destitution. It should never be forgotten in this country which lived by its manufactures, that the population was being used up before its time. Men and women were used, and thrown aside. He could not understand how any person connected with trade, manufactures and commerce, could be deaf to the claim which the aged working men and working women of this country had upon them.

In thanking His Eminence, I ventured to remark that it would be a formidable undertaking to convert a Cardinal. To this he replied, "Cardinals have a very open mind, and are always ready to be converted to the truth"; and went on to illustrate the remark by saying that if in the course of six months no other scheme more to his mind were brought forward, he would support our scheme, because, although he did not think it ideally the best, it was the only scheme in possession, and the one which must be pushed forward.

As the months passed, and no other scheme with strong backing was advanced, we felt we could fairly lay claim to His Eminence's support. Certainly we have never had anything but sympathy from the Roman clergy; and this happy result we have held to be largely due to the Cardinal's utterance.

After bidding him farewell, we were shown over the Westminster Cathedral, then approaching completion, by Mr. Coffey, a Catholic member of our deputation, and a most untiring advocate of Pensions.

After the Roman came the Anglican hearing. Mr. Rogers,

already well known on the platforms of the Christian Social Union, was invited to address the Church Congress at its London session on October 13th. It was at a mass meeting in the Albert Hall that he spoke, and he aroused the great audience to immense enthusiasm. After stating the case of the aged, Mr. Rogers closed with this eloquent appeal:—

Mr. Rogers in
Albert Hall.

“ This effort to obtain a national scheme of relief for the poverty which brings grey hairs in sorrow to the grave, is as some of us think, the initial step in that social legislation which will take us past the arid and barren regions of political Party strife, from which no inspiration ever springs or any great idea ever grows. By its ancient and far-reaching parish organization, by its myriad social activities, and the experience which the working of them have brought to its members, the Anglican Church is well fitted to take a prominent part in these newer developments in our national life. It may be that of late her channels of moral and spiritual inspiration have been choked by the dust of small detail and trivial thought. Let us, in the face of the myriad evils that lie like a leprosy on the body of this our nation, leave these things behind. Let us pass beyond the region of the infinitely little, let us try the magic of great ideas.”

One of the first speakers in the discussion which followed was, picturesquely enough, Canon Blackley, “ perhaps,” as he said, “ the first man in England to propose a system of national pensions.” The Canon did indeed represent the old order: insisted that the people could independently provide for themselves; cried for “ less beer and tobacco ” and more “ thrift ”; and protested against Mr. Booth’s scheme as certain to end in tremendous financial embarrassment and great personal demoralisation. Canon Scott Holland rejoined that Mr. Rogers’s paper “ spoke for itself and answered Canon Blackley beforehand.”

But no votes are taken at the Church Congress.

D.—IN TIME OF WAR: THE TRIPLE CROWN OF LABOUR

CHAPTER XXI

THE PRIMATE AS CHAMPION OF PENSIONS

War!

The South African war began on October 11th, 1899. It was in October, 1898, that the New Zealand Act was passed. In these twelve months Pensions had advanced from the edge of despair to the eve of success. Had there been no war, the Government could scarcely have avoided introducing an Old Age Pensions Bill in 1900. But the movement, which received its first impetus from the Antipodes, received its first serious check from the Cape.

The Nation absorbed.

The need was unaltered, the remedy was undisputed, the argument was as unassailable as ever. But public attention was focussed on "the Front." The light heart that looked for immediate victory, and then the anguished alarm for the safety of the Empire that set in after the horror of the Black Week, were equally heedless of claims of social reform. The newspapers that had been hospitable to letters and news about Pensions were now constrained, by the pressure of "battle, murder, and sudden death," to close their columns to us. Many public men saw in the colossal expenditure going on in the sub-continent good ground to excuse themselves for years from so much as thinking about Pensions. Too many of the rank and file of the working classes were far more absorbed in the Modder panics or Mafeking paeans than in any prospect, pleasant or repellent, of distant old age.

The Labour leaders were happily less swayed by gusts of popular passion than the bulk of the nation. They did not lose heart about the reform which had once been so near achievement. The National Committee, undeterred, went

on quietly with its work. It stirred up the old local committees; it established new in Leicester, Nottingham, and Cardiff.

Mr. Rogers was indefatigable. He passed to and fro throughout the country like a flame of fire, kindling everywhere an enthusiasm responsive to his own. It might be a great Conference of associated wage-earners gathered from a wide area, it might be a working men's debating club, or a lecture in an out-of-the-way colliery village or rustic hamlet—it mattered not. Wherever men asked to hear of Pensions, there Mr. Rogers went, eloquent, stimulating, conclusive. Old age he always championed, but he never failed to make it the centre of a wide horizon of ennobling thought. The principles he expounded laid the train for more extended reforms.

Unable myself, from the prior claims of the Settlement, to take a very active part in this itinerant advocacy, I was yet in the closest touch with Mr. Rogers throughout the agitation. We saw each other at least once or twice every week, and his vivid narrative kept me aware of all that was of moment in his missionary tours. Mr. Barnes and Mr. Maddison—to mention two other of our true allies—refused to be deafened by the beating of the war drum, but persisted in carrying on their Pensions propaganda.

Mr. Booth himself went down to a meeting in Sheffield on December 11th, in company with Miss Bondfield, Mr. Rogers, and me, and a number of Yorkshire labour men; and with the Deputy Lord Mayor in the chair raised the standard of Pensions in Hallamshire.

The 9th of January of the New Year (1900) the Departmental Committee appointed to estimate the cost of the scheme of the Select Committee issued its report. This may be summarised in the following table:—

"A Tongue of fire."

Whom the War-Drum could not silence.

Departmental Committee on Cost.

Estimated number of persons over 65 years of age in 1901	...	...	2,016,000
Deduct:—			
For those whose incomes exceed 10/- a week: in England and Ireland, 37 per cent.; in Scotland, 35 per cent.			741,000
For paupers in England, 27 per cent.; in Scotland, 16 per cent.; in Ireland, 25 per cent.	...	...	515,000
For aliens, criminals, and lunatics			32,000

For inability to comply with thrift test,					
10 per cent.	72,700				
Total deductions	1,360,700				
Estimated number of pensionable persons	655,000				
Estimated cost	£9,976,000				
Add administrative expenses (3 per cent.)	299,000				
Total estimated cost	£10,275,000				
In round figures	£10,300,000				

A Report of real value.

This Report was of immensely greater value than the Report of the Select Committee. Now, for the first time, thanks to the experts of the Treasury, the country had before it a classification of all the aged, with an estimate of the numbers in each class. It was possible to form some tentative conception of its possible cost.

The annual cost of a limited scheme being thus put at £10,300,000, and that being regarded as at present unattainable, it was easy to exclaim, How much less attainable was a universal scheme!

These objections, though enforced by the enormous cost of the war, in no way daunted the National Committee. Fourteen days later it brought out a manifesto, signed by forty prominent representatives of Labour organizations, enforcing the urgency of the demand for Pensions for all in their old age. It was probably as influentially-signed a document as ever issued from the camp of British labour. It was published in full, with all the names attached, on January 25th, 1900, in *The Times*—a newspaper which has been more ready to grant us the courtesy of its columns than many a “progressive” print.

The next important success awaited us at Lambeth Palace. Mr. Rogers had arranged with the Archbishop of Canterbury to receive a deputation on January 27th (1900). It was, I understand, the first Labour deputation of moment that had waited on any English Primate in his historic abode. It consisted of Rogers, Barnes, Crooks, Coffey, Dew, Freake, Garretty, Lamb, Masterson, Stevenson, and me. We went with some measure of trepidation. Dr. Temple was reputed to be quite capable of lecturing us all like a pack of

Labour Manifesto.**Labour at Lambeth Palace.**

schoolboys, and sending us home with painful memories. We had no idea how he stood on the question. He had, of course, been supplied with our printed matter, and Rogers, Barnes, and Garretty put the case forcibly. Then His Grace replied. To our utter surprise and delight he came over to us, horse, foot, and artillery. What he said was in the main exactly what we had most wished to hear. On several moot points he sided with the National Committee. He believed in self-help and self-restraint, he said; he welcomed every rise in wages as enabling men the better to provide for themselves. But he recognised the infirm and the aged as a class demanding exceptional treatment. Therefore he approved of making the experiment of granting Pensions to all in their old age. "I agree," His Grace went on, "with those who maintain that it is of no use saying, 'We will grant Pensions to those who deserve them,' because I see no mode of measuring the desert. There is no kind of tribunal that I can see to be entrusted with such an inquiry. I believe it would be better to give up all idea of that kind, and simply say that everybody who demands his 5s. a week shall have it." Supposing a million persons applied for a pension, His Grace went on, the cost would be thirteen millions. It would be a considerable addition to our present taxation, but, he added, "I am not at all saying we could not bear it. I think we could." It would be difficult to induce the country to grant so large a sum. We should have to fight the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We needed to be very persistent. His Grace concluded with the memorable words, "I hope that what I have said may be of use to you. Of course, it is a matter for the House of Commons, and not for the Lords, but you may depend upon it that in anything that comes before Parliament, if it reaches the House of Lords at all, I should be very ready to defend very strongly what is now sought for by you, and to give it my vote."

Here indeed was progress.

The first vote in Parliament that had been explicitly promised to us was a vote, not in the Commons, but in the Peers; and it was promised us, not by a Liberal Peer, or an insignificant independent Peer, but by the Primate of all England!

The deputation was then entertained to tea by Dr. and Mrs. Temple, and was afterwards shown round the Palace. The Archbishop told the story of his early struggles with poverty; of the time when he was too poor to afford a fire in his room, and had to keep himself warm by heaping rugs

Dr. Temple on
"Desert."

Promise of
Speech and
Vote!

The Primate's
early poverty.

about his body. His guests were profoundly impressed. The idea of the highest prelate of the Anglican Church having once known by personal experience the meaning of "hunger and cold" was probably new to most of them; but, once grasped, it seemed to remove a whole world of estrangement. The bringing of people usually remote into close and friendly touch is one of the bye-products of our agitation on which the heart can rest with thankful satisfaction.

Three days afterwards came out the Queen's Speech, which should have announced an Old Age Pensions Bill, but which curtly declared "The time is not propitious for any domestic reforms which involve a large expenditure."

CHAPTER XXII

SILVER LINING TO THE WAR-CLOUD

War-fever and Queen's Speech notwithstanding, the forces **L.R.C. formed.** that made for social reform did not halt in their march.

Next month—February, 1900—saw the birth of the Labour Representation Committee. This body was the outcome of the resolution of the Plymouth Congress in the previous September, of which I have already spoken. It further embodied the unitive purpose which found expression nine months earlier in our National Committee. It began by combining Trade Unions, branches of the Independent Labour Party, and the Social Democratic Federation, and at the end of its first year numbered 375,000 members in its affiliated organizations. In the light of what I have previously said as to the relation of the two movements, no small significance attaches to the choice of first Chairman by the Labour Representation Committee. Frederick Rogers was chosen for that office.

**Mr. Rogers
chairman.**

Was it not noteworthy?

When Labour men of all sections united to secure fuller representation in Parliament, they found their first year's Chairman—aye, and their second year's Treasurer—in the Organizing Secretary of the Pensions Committee. And it will not be forgotten that Mr. Rogers was the first English workman to suggest in print the formation of a Labour Party in the House of Commons.

It may also be remembered that when the General Federation of Trade Unions was called into being, our Convener for Scotland, Mr. Isaac Mitchell, was called from Glasgow to be its first Secretary.

In Scotland our next important move was made. It had always been our policy to win over the great representative Congresses to our cause, and to "keep them won over," as Americans would say. The English Trade Union Congress being secured, Mr. Rogers went across the Border in April to secure, if possible, the Scottish Trade Union Congress,

**Scottish
Trade Union
Congress.**

which was then meeting in Edinburgh. As he was not a delegate, the standing orders were suspended in order to allow him to speak. But the discussion which followed his moving address showed that the Congress was not yet ready to go as far as its Southron counterpart. With Scottish caution, the resolution only stated "that the time had come for the Government to bring in a Bill to further a system of Old Age Pensions." Nevertheless, the vote in its favour was unanimous, and Mr. Rogers had made effective use of spoken and printed word. To our stock of the latter was now added a pamphlet containing a reprint of Archbishop Temple's speech, and a memorandum to Mr. A. J. Balfour on the whole question by Mr. Rogers.

The Trade Union group of organized Labour was now safely grappled to our cause with hooks of steel. The next great group to be approached was the Co-operative. And at the Co-operative Congress held in Cardiff, June 5th, 1900, Mr. Rogers was given a sympathetic hearing.

The first annual meeting of the National Committee was held in the Birmingham Temperance Hall on July 21st. I was asked to present a survey of "the position and prospects of Old Age Pensions." It is perhaps of value to recall how we worked under the war-cloud, by citing here some things that were said then:—

"A friend said to me the other week, 'The War will have knocked the bottom out of your Old Age Pensions movement.' That remark expresses an opinion which we know to be common, but which we know also to be mistaken. The War has undoubtedly slackened the pace of our movement. It has deferred the hope, aroused by the Peace Conference, of a diversion of national expenditure from armaments to Pensions. It has absorbed the interest and energy of the nation to an extent which left little spirit for social reform. But its effects on our movement have not been wholly negative. It has deepened that sense of national unity which, when turned into home channels, ought to show itself in a livelier feeling of responsibility for the condition of the aged Briton. It has suggested that since millions of money are freely spent in order to give the franchise to a few thousand Outlanders, other millions might be spent in order to *keep* the franchise for aged fellow-subjects at home who are now robbed of their vote on receipt of parish relief. Taxation for war may at first sight seem to make taxation for Pensions less possible, but a closer view suggests just the opposite conclusion. The expenditure forced up for the young man in khaki may be kept up for

Our first
annual
meeting.

What the War
had done for us.

the old man in fustian. Vast increase of expenditure is more easily effected by war than by any peaceful purpose; but the peaceful purpose may be powerful enough to prevent a great expenditure from falling, which it could never have raised in the first instance. The war has also shown that the nation can bear without bankruptcy or serious inconvenience a very much heavier burden of taxation than had been supposed. The old argument against Pensions, that 'we can't afford the outlay,' has certainly had its bottom knocked out by the war.

"Another powerful element in the situation to-day is Imperialism. The vastness and splendour of our world-girdling dominion, which burst like an apocalypse upon the mind of this country at the Diamond Jubilee, were made many times more impressive by the rally of the Colonies to the help of the Mother Country on the field of battle.

"The new-found enthusiasm for Greater Britain promises to be a distinct help to our cause. It need not, and it will not be limited to the military exploits of colonists; it will extend to their yet nobler achievements in the field of social legislation. The progress of Pensions in the Colonies has made the movement at home more rapid.

"Foreign affairs and military questions do certainly threaten to overshadow the demands of home legislation for some considerable time to come. This is a fact to be sincerely deplored. But the balance will right itself in time, and internal reform must have its innings. Then will be the time for enacting Pensions. I have consulted on this point a variety of public men, journalists, Members of Parliament, and Labour leaders. They one and all endorse the conclusion which I had formed as an independent student of public opinion: that, apart from foreign policy, and the military policy it involves, there are *two questions* which surpass all other questions in their hold on popular attention; and these two questions are—first, *Pensions*, and second, *Housing*. At present, so far as we can see, we may accept it as a certainty that Pensions stand first among all the innumerable claimants for home legislation. To have got the question into this unrivalled prominence is to have registered no small advance. Our own demand for universal Pensions has made remarkable headway during the most exciting period of the war. Other and rival projects have retired or been abandoned. With the doubtful exception of the crude and impracticable proposals of the Select Committee, there is no other scheme than our own in possession of the field. We have been mobilizing and consolidating our forces, we have

Imperial initiative.

The first home question.

been advancing our lines as it were under cover of the darkness; and when the day returns, our position and our strength will be an unexpected revelation to many.

“The paramountcy of Pensions among all home questions is the more remarkable in that it has been attained without the help of either of the great political Parties. By the explicit avowals of leaders on both sides of the House our question has been classed as *non-partisan*. The cynic might say that this change of category only means that both Parties have agreed to shelve the difficult problem. There is indeed a danger of non-partisan measures being overlooked amid the crowd of hotly-contested claims. But this is a danger to which, as we have seen, Pensions have not succumbed; and consequently I can only regard this elimination of Party as an unmixed good. One Party or the other may—or may not—be in power when the first Pensions Act is passed; but that accident does not affect the fact that the motive power which pushes the Act through lies not among partisan forces, but among the great neutral forces which organize and operate irrespective of Party lines.”

After referring to other possible auxiliary forces, I proceeded :—

“No hopes which we may cherish concerning the attitude of the Anglican hierarchy must be allowed for one moment to supersede our own self-reliant effort. The demands of organized Labour, organized Labour must itself obtain. We reflect with pleasure upon the prestige and power which accrue to our movement from the great names which endorse it: names like those of Charles Booth in social science, of George Cadbury in philanthropy, and of Frederick Temple in religion; but we can never forget that the key to the situation is in the position taken by the working classes. They, and they alone, can bring about universal Pensions. United and resolute, they will win their way and gain their goal. Divided and lethargic they will fail. Now, so far as the leaders of Labour are concerned I think we have every reason to congratulate ourselves. They are practically solid on the question of Pensions. The National Committee of Organized Labour is a most cheering sign of the times. It combines men of all Parties in the State, and pretty nearly all schools of economic thought. Yet they have worked together with a unanimity unbroken, and, so far as I know, unparalleled. During the whole agitation, now extending over more than eighteen months, I have never heard uttered so much as one angry word. The committee has superseded the old and disastrous policy of

**Exeunt
Parties: enter
the Nation.**

Labour a unit.

antagonism, within and without, by the spirit of conciliation and amity. Of this new and happier temper our organizing secretary is the very embodiment. So far as the leaders are concerned the prospect is excellent. The great question, which only time will answer, is: Will the rank and file follow their leaders? The last word to the working classes in a survey of the situation must be, 'Work out your own salvation.'

" Yet not without hope of other and higher Assistance The record of our movement reads like a series of social marvels. It has been made up of a procession of unanimities, of unexpected combinations, of eminent and spontaneous adhesions. I do not believe that these things are mere increasing strength. They suggest a purpose and 'a tendency increasing strength. They suggest a purpose and 'a tendency not ourselves.' They suggest that the incalculable Factor in human affairs, the secret force of social evolution—whatever be the phrase which our ignorance or our reverence may prefer—has taken the matter in hand, and will put it through. The expectation of the aged poor shall not always fail nor their hope perish."

The note of destiny.

In the course of this address I made one futile appeal. Emboldened by the courageous lead which Archbishop Temple had given, I asked, Would the Church of England follow? Amid the break-up of the Party system, and in the general despair of the mere politician, would she stand forth as in the days of old, the champion of the suffering poor, and secure for them in their feebleness that boon with which cabal and caucus have hitherto only mocked them? Would it not be possible for an Archbishop of Canterbury to introduce into the House of Peers a short declaratory measure which should include among the civil rights of Her Majesty's subjects throughout the realm the right to a pension at a given age? Financial effect to this declaration, of course, could only be given by the House of Commons. But the mere introduction of such a Bill would have an immense effect. We needed a Magna Charta for the aged. Could the Church of England produce another Stephen Langton? I was sanguine enough to believe he might be found in the bench of bishops.

The cry for a Stephen Langton.

Alas and alas! No Stephen Langton has appeared. We have had much valuable sympathy from the Bishops. But the old folks of England owe their pensions in the main, not to bishops, but to Labour leaders.

In vain!

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW WE FOUGHT THE GENERAL ELECTION, 1900

Shelving the old folks.

Signs were numerous that the long-expected General Election was near at hand. So far as the Parties were concerned, the war and its issues were certain to overshadow and exclude all other questions. Neither side was likely to lay much stress on social reform.

On August 4th the Local Government Board sent out a circular to Boards of Guardians, ordering that the aged and deserving poor should receive "different treatment from those whose previous habits and character have not been satisfactory." This was plainly a concession to the movement on behalf of the aged. Even so small a substitute for a great reform was something to be thankful for. For, though not much, it was all we were going to get. But the social paralysis of Parties only made it more incumbent on our non-partisan Committee to see that the claims of the aged were not ignored in the coming fray.

How to prevent it

Early in the year we had sent round to our members a circular, some paragraphs of which may be quoted as indicating the general line taken :—

"The National Committee, while desiring that the Pensions question should be made a test question at the earliest possible date, has not yet decided to make it a test question at the impending elections.

"But whatever influence we possess, individually or collectively, with any Party, or with the public unattached to any Party, we are bound to use in order to force our demand into the foreground of legislative attention.

"Prior to the selection of candidates for the Party to which you may happen individually to belong, or with which you may possess influence, your aim should be to get a resolution passed by the Party Association affirming that it is highly desirable to select a candidate prepared to give special prominence in his programme to our demand of Pensions for All.

“ In any consultation or deliberation in which you may take part, make it difficult for the Association to select a candidate who does not support Pensions for All.

“ In any case, see to it that every candidate in your district is approached on the question.

“ Approach him whenever possible by a deputation of persons of the most influence in the constituency, backed up by resolutions from every local body of wage-earners, from local authorities, and from local religious bodies. (See ‘Hints to a Helper.’)

“ Endeavour to get a PLAIN and STRAIGHT answer to the question :— Extract an answer.

Will you, if returned to Parliament, vote for a measure embodying the principle that every British subject in the United Kingdom shall, on attaining a given age, be entitled to receive a Free Pension from the State?

“ If the candidate pleads lack of information, provide him with our printed matter, notably Mr. Booth’s penny pamphlet, Mr. Barnes’s leaflet, and our Manifesto for the General Election, and secure appointment for later interview.

“ See that the widest publicity is given to the answer, provisional or final, which you receive, and send it to the Organizing Secretary.

“ Approach every editor, preacher, and important personage likely to exert influence, and press on them the duty of insisting on the question of Pensions receiving prominent and effective attention from the electorate. Only where a personal interview is impossible communicate by letter. Use every influence.

“ Use our printed matter freely.

“ See that at least the most important public meeting on each side is supplied with copies, preferably on entering the hall, of our Manifesto or Mr. Barnes’s leaflet.

“ Where it would help our movement, heckle candidates publicly on the question.

“ REMEMBER, over a million old folks, in workhouses or in dishonouring indigence outside, are depending on your action in this General Election for speedy or for tardy release from their present degradation. See to it, that their release shall be speedy !”

Our manifesto was ready in July, when it was passed by the Committee. As this was the first time our demand was formulated and put before the country during the General Election, I reproduce the Manifesto here :— Our manifesto.

OLD AGE PENSIONS FOR ALL. AN APPEAL TO THE ELECTORS.

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

In the approaching General Election many grave issues

will be submitted for your decision, but none will surpass in importance that which relates to the condition of our aged fellow-subjects.

Governmental inquiries have shown that considerably over one-half of the population which has reached 65 years of age is in want. More than a million aged persons in the United Kingdom depend for bare subsistence on Poor Law relief, with its consequent degradation and disfranchisement, or on the scanty resources of over-burdened relatives, or on "charity." Rather than bend to these humiliations, some of the aged have chosen to starve.

We cannot look to Friendly Societies or Trade Unions for a solution of the difficulty. Friendly Societies, with their membership of 4,203,601, can only help Old Age by continuous sick pay, and on this side of their work are actuarially unsound. Of Trade Unions, according to the last return, 77 per cent. of the unions are unable to make provision for Old Age.

The neglect of our old people is nothing less than a public disgrace. It is a shocking instance of national improvidence in one of the richest peoples in the world.

It is grossly unjust. The aged Britons now in need built up by their labour our industrial ascendancy, and produced our swollen abundance.

It is unkind and inhuman. Honour and respect are the tributes which naturally belong to age; and common humanity revolts at the thought of leaving those who are past their strength to the ruthless ordeal of the struggle for existence.

We appeal to all classes of the community to combine in wiping out this blot upon our national escutcheon. Party leaders on both sides of the House have declared that this is no Party question, and have invited in its solution the co-operation of good men in all Parties. It is our plain duty as citizens to hesitate no longer, but to find some remedy.

Among the many remedies which have been suggested, we can approve of no contributory scheme—*i.e.*, no scheme which, while endowing those who make independent provision for themselves, leaves untouched the great mass of the labouring poor who cannot wisely afford to lay by, and shuts out with them almost the whole of our working womanhood.

We resolutely oppose any State-provision for Old Age which depends on such inquisition into present or previous circumstances as is carried on by Poor Law officials or by amateur associations for the detection of imposture. To ascertain who are "deserving" and who are "undeserving"

is a task beyond the competence of human tribunals. When the attempt is made, it generally confounds mere economic and possibly selfish prudence with ethical desert; and, in any case, violates the chaste reticence of self-respecting poverty. We refuse to punish "desert" by compelling it to lay bare its sacredly-guarded secrets to the public gaze.

We repudiate every proposal to connect Old Age Pensions with any Department, Board, officials, or methods distinctive of the present Poor Law administration. We abjure Bumble and all his works. No taint of pauperism must be allowed to cling to the provision which the State confers on its veterans of industry.

The only satisfactory solution which we have found is the principle which entitles every British subject within the United Kingdom, on attaining a given age, to a free pension from the State. This principle, which has behind it the high scientific authority of Mr. Charles Booth, has been endorsed with impressive unanimity by a series of Conferences held in the chief industrial centres, and representing with rare completeness the associated wage-earners of the nation, as they are banded together in Trade, Friendly, and Co-operative Societies.

We issue this appeal as officers of the body which was constituted by these Conferences, and which is thereby entitled to its name of

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR.

Our policy is supported by the best known and most trusted leaders of British Labour, and we are continually receiving fresh adhesions from bodies of wage-earners throughout the country.

To reduce the principle to practice, our Committee has agreed upon 65 years as the qualifying age, and 5s. a week as the uniform amount.

So specified, our demand involves, at most, an annual expenditure of £26,000,000, and probably in any case over twenty-two millions sterling. Against this sum must be placed as offset the saving which would result in indoor and outdoor relief, as well as in the salaries of Poor Law officials, and in other workhouse "establishment charges." The balance to be defrayed out of the general revenues of the State, local and imperial, remains undoubtedly large.

The scheme propounded by the Aged Deserving Poor Committee of 1899 would, according to the report of a Departmental Committee, cost in 1901 £10,300,000. It is at first sight a cheaper scheme than ours, but what it seems

to save in cost, it sacrifices in justice and in the self-respect of the poor. And it raises many practical difficulties which threaten to make it unworkable.

The amount we require is certainly not beyond the resources of the wealthiest nation on this side of the globe. When war breaks out, the British people authorise at once a colossal outlay without waiting to specify the precise taxes which will have to be imposed. Even the most bellicose patriot will hardly deny that the deliverance of a million aged Britons from pauperism, disfranchisement, and other forms of degrading dependence, is an object far superior to the grounds on which most wars have been waged. It is not our duty at this stage to indicate the ways and means by which the millions needed for Old Age Pensions should be raised. That is one of the things we keep statesmen for.

With all earnestness we urge this demand of humanity and justice on the conscience of the nation. We appeal to candidates for Parliament, and to electors of all Parties and of none, to join in supporting it. We appeal to the Churches, and to persons professing religious principle as the guide of their lives, to judge by the highest standard of their faith their present electoral duty to the Aged Poor. Be it remembered that the Archbishop of Canterbury has promised, to a Bill embodying our demand, his support and his vote.

We appeal above all to working men, and to societies of working men, to use their overwhelming power in this national crisis to secure the boon of pensions, for their aged relatives now, and for themselves afterwards. Let them cultivate the best kind of thrift, which is co-operative thrift, and employ the State in this particular as a mutual provident association.

Let every elector ask himself whether, among the host of questions—local, national, or international—on which his vote is sought, there is one to compare with this question of the plight of more than a million fellow subjects who bear the double load of age and poverty.

Remember the Old Folks at home, and do not forget the Old Folks who are NOT at home.

On behalf of the National Committee of Organised Labour,

FREDERICK ROGERS, *Organising Secretary.*

Browning Hall, Walworth, S.E.

Two hundred thousand copies were printed and in readiness. A shorter statement was also felt necessary, and Mr.

Rogers drew up his concise little leaflet :—

THE WORN-OUT WORKMAN: WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH HIM?

It is a fact that of the two millions of men and women in this country over the age of 65 about two-thirds are in want, and only escape starvation by the charity of relatives poor like themselves, or by seeking parish relief.

It is a fact that a Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to inquire into the condition of the Aged Poor came to the conclusion that, in the majority of cases, their poverty was no fault of their own. Obviously it was not; it was due to their inability to obtain employment on account of age, and people cannot help getting old.

It is a fact that we are the richest nation this side of the globe, and that these men and women by their labour, often most shamefully underpaid, helped to build up our riches.

It is a fact that all who have had experience of its working are convinced that the Poor Law has failed to solve the problem presented by age in modern industrial life.

It is a fact that the majority of those who have given most careful thought to the subject have come to the conclusion that the only alternative to the Poor Law is a system of Old Age Pensions.

Vote, then, for those candidates who will face these facts, and will endeavour to solve them by recognising Pensions for the Aged as a civic right, and so remove a scandal from our midst.

The Rev. Canon Moore Ede says: “All through life the dark shadow of old age of penury and pauperism hangs over nearly three-fourths of the population of this the richest nation in Europe—a gloomy prospect. Hard work for fifty years and more, and then after all the toil and effort to sink down into the submerged tenth at last. There ought to be, there must be, some road out of this corner of darkest England.”

There is—when the electors resolve there shall be. The nation is rich enough to provide for its poor by a system of Old Age Pensions.

FREDERICK ROGERS.

Browning Hall, London, S.E.

But here let Mr. Rogers tell his own tale :—

“Immediately after the annual meeting, held at Birmingham on Saturday, July 21st, a copy of the annual report and a letter asking for pecuniary support was sent to every Saturating the constituencies.

Member of the House of Commons and every Member of the House of Lords. The results, from a monetary point of view, were not important, but every Member of the then existing Legislature was made acquainted with our objects and our work.

“ In preparation for the General Election, 200,000 copies of ‘An Appeal to the Electors,’ 500,000 copies of ‘The Worn-out Workman’ as a handbill, and 5,000 copies of the same as poster, and 1,000 copies of special poster for agricultural districts, were printed. Every convener of our district committees was communicated with, was asked to be ready when the election came, and was requested to inform the central committee what amount of literature he required for his particular district. An effort was made to interest women in the work of the committee by writing letters to the leading ladies’ newspapers, but without success. Letters were sent to fifty of the leading newspapers of the United Kingdom inviting the co-operation of all interested, and two days after the letters appeared the General Election was announced.”

So far as our limited funds permitted, every preparation was made that when the crisis came, the cause of the aged should be worthily represented.

The Dissolution burst upon the nation on September 25th. The electoral struggle was practically over by October 13th. It lasted a little more than a fortnight. Yet in that time our forces were mobilised all over the Kingdom, and our printed matter was circulated broadcast. Mr. Rogers reported :—

“ The total amount of leaflets and posters issued from Browning Hall during the Election is as follows : 50,000 copies of the leaflet ‘The Case Briefly Stated,’ by G. N. Barnes, 199,000 copies of ‘An Appeal to the Electors,’ 280,000 of ‘The Worn-out Workman’ as leaflet, and about 3,000 of the same as poster, and 500 of special poster for agricultural districts. In addition to this about 1,000 copies of the Balfour memorandum, and Mr. C. Booth’s pamphlet, 1,000 copies of ‘Hints to a Helper,’ by F. H. Stead, 2,000 copies of the manifesto signed by labour leaders, and reprinted from the *Times* of January 24th, 1900, and 1,000 copies of the Birmingham Conference were distributed. During the Election I visited Leeds, Sunderland, Newcastle, Romford, Southend, Walthamstow, Woking, and Enfield, and in those places was amply satisfied with the use which had been made of our leaflets and posters, while a large parcel of letters received from the centres enumerated above showed that they were appreciated widely.”

Ours was a campaign of education, not a campaign for seats. The oyster of the average elector's mind only opens during a General Election; and we used the opportunity to insert as much of our fact and claim as we could. When the next General Election came round, our pabulum was seen to have been well assimilated.

There was only one seat which was contested simply and solely on the question of universal Old Age Pensions. The candidate was, properly enough, the Chairman of our National Committee, Councillor Stevens. He stood as Independent candidate, resolved to represent only the demand for Pensions as a civil right. With magnificent courage he contested a seat that was hopeless at any time, and ten times more hopeless during the South African War. He attacked East Birmingham, in the central stronghold of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. He met with inevitable defeat. 2,835 votes were polled for him, and 4,989 for his adversary, Sir J. B. Stone. But he accomplished a notable deed. If in anything Ministers were resolute, it was in limiting the issue of the electoral fight to the War in South Africa. Most determined of them all in this policy was the Colonial Secretary. Yet in the heyday of his glory, and in the seat of his power, Mr. Chamberlain was compelled by the action of Mr. Stevens to descend from his war charger and address himself once more to the less flamboyant question of Pensions. It was something to elicit at such a moment the assurance from Mr. Chamberlain: "We have not done with Old Age Pensions. The tale is not quite told yet. Perhaps if he (Mr. Stevens) will give me time, I will be more fortunate than I have been in the past."

In the rest of his utterances Mr. Chamberlain showed a "I know my working man." sad lack of touch with fact. He pronounced the project of universal Pensions to be "an insult to the working classes"; "it would be altogether contrary to your interests and your wishes." He did not believe the working man would be willing to pay taxes for pensions given indiscriminately to all; and, he added, "I think I know my working man better than that!" And this in face of all the facts chronicled in the foregoing pages! Taking the Birmingham Conference alone (March 25th, 1899), 564 credentialled representatives of 347,550 working men belonging to Trade Unions, Friendly Societies, and Co-operative Societies in nineteen Midland counties—"those decent, honest, thrifty working men" of whom Mr. Chamberlain spoke, "to be found in the Friendly Societies and the Trade Unions and the Benefit Societies"—unanimously declared themselves in favour of the proposal

Bearding the lion in his den.

Forcing Pensions to the front.

which Mr. Chamberlain called "an insult to the working classes" and "altogether contrary to their wishes." And Mr. Chamberlain had said he would await with great interest the report of these very proceedings. He evidently did not know his working man.

"The basis of my proposal." There was one positive utterance in what was manifestly an ill-considered speech: "The basis of my proposal substantially has always been this—if a working man could show, when he got to the age of 65, that he had lived a decent, industrious, honest life—if he had made any provision for himself, then the State should come in and increase that provision, and he should be put in a better position."

One more remark may be quoted: "I cannot carry any scheme now unless I have behind me the working men of this country." Unless! and how easily he might have had!

Undoubtedly the ballot boxes did play havoc with some of our staunchest supporters. Mr. Steadman was flung at Stepney. Mr. F. Maddison was chased from Sheffield. Mr. Wilkie was rejected by Sunderland. Even Mr. Burt's majority was reduced at Morpeth. But as this was the first national election since our demand was sharply formulated, it was the first election which saw a number of members returned pledged to universal Pensions. The Labour group to a man was of course among them; and there were many others.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GENERAL METHODS OF OUR PROPAGANDA

The Unionist Government was again installed in power, and with an overwhelming majority in both Houses of Parliament. It was opposed to universal Pensions, but it was pledged up to the hilt to some form of pensions legislation at some time not specified. Our business henceforth was to see that whatever scheme might be favoured should be an instalment, and not a prevention, of our demand, and that delay should be as short as possible. The war was the standing excuse for postponement; but everyone devoutly hoped the war would not last much longer: and with peace—Pensions! We must demonstrate the purpose of the nation so clearly as to make it easy, not to say necessary, for the Government to legislate at an early date.

Unionist ascendency complete.

First we set about acquainting the new House with our position. In Mr. Rogers' words:—

Younger men in both Parties for us.

"At the close of the election it was found that our ideas had made substantial progress. This was apparent when every member of the newly-elected House of Commons received a copy of our interim report, and a request for their opinions as to Old Age Pensions. The pile of letters are an interesting revelation of the mind of the average Member of Parliament. Of vague sympathy there was enough and to spare, of sitting on the fence not a little, and of a clear understanding of the conditions of the problem, some. Among those who understand it well must be counted a large number of the younger Conservatives. Between the older Liberals and Conservatives there is little essential difference: what difference there is is one of terms."

We were glad to feel we had allies in the Ministerial camp. A Conservative member wrote that he always put the question this way: "Do you prefer to be taxed to make people miserable in the workhouse, or happy in their own homes?" And at the National Union of Conservative Associations, on December 18th, a resolution was moved rejoicing

How Unionists lost seats.

at the Government's victory, but deplored its failure "to introduce a measure for the solution of the problem of dealing with the question of old age." The mover, Mr. H. S. Foster, said that in the rural districts "they were continually asked why in the past five years nothing had been done to legislate on the subject. The answer to experts was simple. They knew how full of difficulty the question was, and that the Government had not neglected inquiry. With those, however, who were not experts, a long and categorical answer was necessary. And this was not always appreciated: and the result was that many good friends had lost their seats on *that one question alone* in the rural districts."

This sore experience, and the solemn pledges of the dominant party had to be turned to account. Renewed and persistent agitation would avail.

Engineering the movement. Some idea of the general way the agitation was engineered would now be in place.

Mr. Rogers and I saw each other, as I have said, at least twice in the week, and any suggestion which occurred to either of us was at once made common property, developed, and mostly carried into practice.

There also were our frequent committees, sub-committees, and meetings of officers, in which Mr. Waite's large experience, fostering sympathy and quick appreciation of a valuable proposal were of the utmost service. Our meetings were usually very informal, full of quick suggestion and prompt resolution; fuller still of a genial-hearted brotherliness that made a spot of sunshine in our lives. Whatever difference of opinion there might be, I never remember even a shadow of unpleasantness. This pleasure was often heightened by the presence of Miss Margaret Bondfield, of the Shop Assistants' Union. She had the distinction of being the only woman on the National Committee. The sex was most admirably represented. She was a great power on the platform, where she brought her distinctive woman's gift of keen intuition, quick sympathy, and incisive raillery. She was just as helpful in committee. Once or twice, when meeting in Birmingham, the delight of Mrs. Edward Cadbury's company was added, and left a gleam of grace in the agitators' memories.

The help of Woman. Our general idea was to overrun the country and capture it for the cause. The means which we took to secure this end were innumerable. A few may be mentioned.

Our general idea. We never despised the day of small things. Invitations came to us sometimes from places we had never heard of



THE WARDEN'S ROOM, BROWNING HALL,
Office of the National Pensions Committee.



CLAYTON HALL,
Where the Conference was held, Dec. 13th, 1898, and the National Pensions Committee was formed on May 9th, 1899.

before, and could hardly find in map or railway guide. But, so long as bare out-of-pocket expenses were paid, and other engagements allowed, we never declined a request for speech or lecture or discussion, no matter how out of the way the place might be, or small the audience.

The P.S.A. platform was much used. At first there was **The P.S.A.** a suspicion that "Pensions were too political"; but it soon faded before the conviction that they were essentially religious. Nor was the unwillingness increased when men heard "what came of a P.S.A. address," and together traced the agitation back to Mr. Reeves's speech. And, when sufficient sympathy was shown, the potent influence of prayer was illustrated and invoked. Many centres of spiritual dynamic have thus been opened.

Adult Schools have been similarly imbued. Nor had the time-honoured Mutual Improvement Society been neglected: nor the club debate. And wherever an opening was made, leaflets were poured in.

Then there were more public discussions, as when Sir U. Kay Shuttleworth presided, November 7th, 1899, and Mr. Rogers set the ball rolling; or when Principal Dale of Liverpool University presided, and Professors and Socialists mingled in the fray which Mr. Rogers had started. These have been very numerous.

The Universities were not overlooked. Mr. Rogers is beloved of the young men of Oxford and Cambridge, and has frequently carried on his apostolate among them. Sometimes a more Olympic council was called, as on April 22nd, 1901, when Mr. Charles Booth held high conference at Balliol College, Oxford, with the Master, Professor E. Caird, in the chair.

University Extensionists in their summer meetings were glad to be enlightened on the problem of old age: and at various times Mr. Barnes and Mr. Rogers have enlightened them.

Even Party meetings were not shunned. We made it perfectly clear that we belonged to no Party, but were willing to give information or advice to all parties. Within a week after the formation of the National Committee, I spoke on Pensions to the Women's Liberal Association at Westminster Palace Hotel, and escaped scathless. Mr. Rogers has passed through such ordeals scores of times. These occasions afforded us valuable opportunities of dealing faithfully with Party delinquencies. It may have been irritating to the hearers; but it *was* comforting to the speaker.

Public discussions.

The Universities.

Even Party meetings.

**The Press,
urban and
rural.**

The Press was a medium of which, after our earliest beginnings, we were eager to avail ourselves. In the days when all the hard fighting was done, the only help the newspapers gave us was publicity. They reported our meetings, and (though not always) published our letters. They interviewed us often, especially as the movement advanced. Among the great London dailies *The Times* has shown us always the greatest courtesy. With the rest, the limits of space have not infrequently barred us entrance. The provincial Press, not having on it the claims of a world Press, was able to give, and did give, to our speeches and letters fuller hospitality. Nor did we merely seek the usual journals, circulating chiefly in town and city. Many townsmen despise rural newspapers. We did not. They reach the agricultural labourer, and through them we reached him: with results which backsiding Unionists had to deplore when they lost their seats. To the many reporters, interviewers and editors who have aided the cause and flavoured the memory of their service with some of the pleasantest personal recollections, I would like to offer our hearty thanks.

**Leaflet or
"Leader"?**

As means of publicity, the newspapers have been very valuable: as leaders of opinion—well, it would be perhaps rather harsh to say we found them worth nothing: certainly, we found the printed "leaders" as a rule to be among the last to follow. Party obsession is doubtless responsible for this drawback. There were noble exceptions, which it would be invidious to mention. But on the whole, independent initiative in the development of popular purpose has been singularly absent. The leaflet, far more than the leading article, has been effective in leading the mind of the people. The Press had been the mirror rather than the motor.

**Through the
letter box.**

Through the Post Office, as has incidentally transpired, we carried on a steady bombardment. We approached any and every one of serious importance in any sphere of life. We turned on as correspondent the particular secretary or member of committee who had readiest access. We ought to have acquired some aptitude, not merely in knowing who's who, but who suits whom. We have tried to make every chord in the lyre of human interest and affection vibrate responsive to the claims of the aged. We have thus obtained a volume of opinion of unusual range.

"Lobbying."

The personal interview was still more efficacious. It took up much time, in seeking or securing an appointment, as well as in going to and fro. It also involved a great deal of that most wearying, and too often thankless, form of

activity known as lobbying. To send in for Members of Parliament already bored with all manner of calls upon their attention and sympathy, and to wait their convenience or freedom from more absorbing engagements, is a dispiriting process and somewhat lowering to one's sense of dignity. But the conversation, howsoever obtained, was generally worth while. Face to face with men who could hinder or help, we could quickly arrive at the crucial difficulty, and if we did not succeed in removing it, we at least dispelled a cloud of misunderstanding. We also learned the temperature and discerned the subtle shades of feeling in the individual and in the set to which he belonged, which were as valuable for our purposes as the readings of thermometer and barometer are to the meteorologist. And not infrequently the interview that had taken some trouble to obtain proved the beginning of a real personal friendship.

Some expressions of invaluable opinion came to us quite unsought. A signal example may be given. In 1900 Miss Isabel Faraday, a cousin of the great electrical and scientific philosopher, presented the Settlement with the house she formerly occupied, in East Dulwich, as a Home for old folks. The beneficent destiny which had linked the Browning Settlement with the promotion of Old Age Pensions, in this gift showed its intention of connecting the Settlement with the movement for providing Old Age Homes. The Home was opened on October 25th, 1901, and at the public meeting subsequently held in Browning Hall Sir James Crichton Browne pronounced a eulogy upon Michael Faraday which was full of personal reminiscences, and delivered with splendid eloquence. In it he took occasion to refer to the Pensions movement, with which the hall was associated. He is, as is well known, one of the foremost experts on mental diseases of the present day. He said he spoke as one who had a right to know. He declared that, costly as the enactment of universal Pensions might be, it would yet be a most judicious expenditure of the national wealth. For, as he went on to say, one of the most frequent causes of mental disorder was a harassing anxiety caused by fears of a destitute old age. Were that fear removed by a pension, however small, but certain, the result would be an immense gain to the mental health of the nation, and so to its economic efficiency. The amount expended upon Pensions would be a most lucrative investment of the national wealth.

In our conversation and correspondence with the ruling classes, so called, clerical and lay, we made two pleasing and perhaps unexpected discoveries. We discovered that

Old age
Homes.

A boon to
mental health.

"So 'umble."

those whom we approached were full of the deepest sympathy and compassion for the sufferings of the aged. Why these had found such small practical outlet was explained by our second discovery. The letters we received revealed a hitherto unexpected extent of profound humility. They declared themselves quite incompetent to pronounce upon a problem of such exceeding complexity and difficulty as the problem of old age. They would gladly see the aged poor relieved, but really they could not pronounce in favour of any particular scheme : they were so insufficiently informed, they were so painfully conscious of their manifold incompetency that they could neither do anything themselves nor advise anyone else to do it. Some of them had had time to master the mysteries of the differential and integral calculuses. Some had even not shrunk from grappling with the interior mysteries of the Godhead. But for the endeavour to relieve the daily misery of a million of their fellow-subjects, they had not been able to find time or ability.

It was a refreshing contrast to turn from the mental paralysis of these members of the "ruling classes" to the robust purpose and keen practical insight of the Labour leaders.

"A counsel of perfection."

A further stage was reached when, one by one or in whole battalions, all other schemes of Pensions were swept from the field, and ours remained in possession. Then we found our correspondents following another tack. They were now quite convinced that the only logical, proper and unimpeachable system was Mr. Booth's. But, willing as they were themselves to support this plan, they were perfectly certain the nation would never, never consent to the prodigious cost involved. There seemed to be half visible a smile of satisfaction behind the argument as they shaped it to their minds—

No scheme but Booth's can now be considered :
But the cost of Booth's scheme cannot be met :
Therefore nothing can be done !

"A publican's benefit."

Another "argument" which came from such opposite quarters as from a Radical caucus manager on one side, and from very near to the Conservative Prime Minister on the other, was not, I am glad to say, often advanced. It was to the effect that the only people who would profit by a general system of Pensions for the aged were the publicans. Much as we resented the imputation cast upon the old folks, and much as we pitied the blank ignorance displayed of the actual life of the poor, we would not have minded so much if it had only led to the Party that usually supported the

publicans' interest supporting this measure too. But it did not.

Our chosen line of propaganda ran, as our name implies, through all forms of organized Labour. The great national unions were used to the full, as had been shown. But perhaps no agitation before has so brought out the value of the Trades Council. The Trades Council was once looked down upon as the happy hunting ground of Socialistic cranks. Our work has shown it to be capable of becoming the local organ of a great national movement. Again and again has the Trades Council arranged indoor discussion or outdoor demonstration, mobilized the workers of a town, bombarded local M.P.'s, made audible the voice of the non-articulate in a duly summoned town's meeting.

In the beginning of 1901, just before the newly-elected House of Commons assembled for the first time, Mr. Rogers sent a circular to every Trades Council in the United Kingdom, asking them to pass a resolution to the effect that the time had arrived for the Government to legislate on Old Age Pensions, and that no legislation would be satisfactory which did not bestow pensions as a civil right; and, having passed the resolution, to forward it to their local Members of Parliament, to the Prime Minister, and to the Leader of the House of Commons. No fewer than sixty-three replied that they had done so. They were in all parts of Great Britain, from Inverness to Devonport, from Paisley to Dover, from Cardiff to Norwich, and included almost every great industrial centre. Many others who did not reply took the desired action. The number of Members of Parliament whose pure minds were thus stirred up by way of remembrance must have been very large, to say nothing of the local effect produced. The Trades Councils of Great Britain have won national honours over Old Age Pensions.

Value of the
Trades
Council.

Stirring up
the M.P.'s.

CHAPTER XXV

SCOTLAND WEST AND EAST: AND THE CO-OPERATORS

The analogy of war.

As has been evident throughout, our strategy was unceasingly concerned with the larger combinations of Labour.

The military metaphor dogs our footsteps in almost every attempt to describe the agitation. As we cannot escape from it, we may as well pursue the analogy.

I have just been depicting our minor engagements. I have shown how we captured coigns of advantage here and there; won a slight skirmish in a village hall; spiked a gun or two in the Press; gained access to heights by paths not known to the secular politician; kept up a steady fire through the post, and so on. But a Conference representative of all the forces of Labour in a large area corresponds to a great battle. That won, a whole district has been so far forth conquered for the cause. The more representative the Conference, and the franker the discussion, the more complete is the victory. Difficulties felt are expressed and removed; objections answered on the spot; and the main arguments are at once adapted to the local environment, and assimilated by the local intelligence. The first Seven Conferences were the decisive battles of our campaign. The subsequent years have been spent in following up these smashing blows, delivered as they were at the chief centres of British industry.

Our Glasgow committee.

But it may be remembered that the Glasgow Conference left some things to be desired. It could hardly be considered a conquest of Scotland. And the local committee was soon weakened by Mr. Isaac Mitchell's removal to London. Further operations beyond the Border were necessary. Mr. Rogers addressed the Scottish Trade Union Congress, as I have reported, but though the vote was unanimous the resolution was not much of a triumph for our cause. So Mr. Rogers went up to reanimate and reorganize the Glasgow garrison. The committee was fortunate in its selection of officers. Mr. Galloway, Chairman of the Glasgow Trades

Council, brought to the work a great fund of religious earnestness. The Treasurer, Mr. Glen, had a fine grasp of the larger bearings of the movement. The Convener, Mr. B. H. Shaw, proved himself a jewel. Quiet, unobtrusive, self-repressing, he did more than anyone else to organize victory for pensions on Scottish soil. He set about to secure the support of some of the most influential men in the West country, leaders in ecclesiastical and political life, and with the aid of his colleagues he organized a great Conference for October 6th (1900). They did not, of course, know that that date would fall in the later days of the General Election. But the storm of electoral strife that was still raging did not affect either the numbers or the spirit of the meeting. There were assembled in the Glasgow Co-operative Hall, under the presidency of Sir William Maxwell, a fine audience of 622 delegates, representative of 406 bodies in the West of Scotland. For the first time in these Conferences, Trade Unions were not in the majority. They formed less than one-third of the bodies represented. Co-operative Societies were also much more numerous, though numbering less than one-sixth. The most important fact was that branches of ten Orders of Friendly Societies formed very nearly one-half of the constituency. These proportions showed a better balance between the three great groups of Labour. The figures were:—Total bodies represented, 406: Friendly Societies, 192; Trade Unions, 144; Co-operative, 62; Trades Councils, 8. A number of leaders of Glasgow life were also in attendance, including my old friend Rev. John Hunter, D.D. It was certainly the most determined and by far the most enthusiastic Conference I had ever addressed. Lunch in the interval of debate added greatly to the feeling of good comradeship. Our resolutions were carried one after the other by the whole audience, bar one. A solitary dissident in each case made the else unbroken unanimity the more real and striking. The West of Scotland was won.*

But Mr. Shaw was not content with this achievement. He East followed set about organizing an East of Scotland Committee. The West.

A decisive Conference for the West.

*An illustration of the way this agitation had to be dovetailed in with other duties is afforded by this Conference. The winter session of the Settlement was just being launched. The usual rush of work was intensified by the pressure of the General Election. I travelled North by night train: on arriving at Glasgow went to a hotel to prepare my speech: at noon reached the Conference, which lasted all the afternoon: in the evening called on friends to interest them in the movement: returned home by night train: reaching Walworth in time to go through a full Sunday's work, the pleasure of which was heightened by the good report I brought.

same policy was pursued, and on June 6th, 1901, a most important Conference assembled at the Free Gardeners' Hall, Edinburgh, with Councillor Stewart in the chair. Here again there was a better balance between the three great Labour groups. The proportion were almost the same as at Glasgow—roughly, $\frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{2}$. There were 316 delegates present. The basis of representation was one delegate to 500 members. The Trade Unions bodies numbered 93 delegates; the Co-operative, 51; the Friendly Societies (six Orders), 172. Resolutions in support of universal Pensions were carried unanimously. Here tea was served to enliven the proceedings. On the Chairman inviting only those who had delegates' tickets to participate—for the gallery was occupied by spectators—someone smartly called out, "Make it universal!" The clever hit was well taken, and "rations for all" was accepted as a practical counterpart for that afternoon to Pensions for all.

Ten million Co-operators. These Conferences had, of course, been convened *ad hoc*—for the special purpose of considering our resolutions. A yet more signal victory had been obtained the week before, May 28th, at the regular Congress of one of the great industrial groups. The Co-operative Congress, representing 10,000,000 members, was then in session, and it was addressed in our behalf by Mr. Frederick Maddison.

Frederick Maddison. As has frequently appeared, Mr. Maddison has been one of the most effective advocates of Pensions For All. I first met him, it is pleasant to remember, at an open-air meeting in Walworth, to which he had come at our invitation to help in our Sunday morning work. There were but a handful of working men about, but from that day forward Mr. Maddison has been a great friend and helper of the Settlement. He has spoken frequently to our men, and aroused great enthusiasm by his addresses. He and they have found a close tie in their common admiration of the great Italian apostle of association, Giuseppe Mazzini. His eloquent advocacy of temperance, of justice to the worker, of "the worker's need of God," have left enduring and grateful memories. Mr. Maddison has at times a rough tongue for those who disagree with him. But the nation is vastly the richer for his high principle, his selfless devotion to the cause of Labour, his courageous fidelity to unpopular truth, his apostolate of international peace, and his deep religious conviction.

In such hands our cause was more than safe. The ground, too, had been prepared by a succession of meetings amongst co-operators since Mr. Rogers addressed the Congress in the previous year. Mr. Maddison moved: "That this Congress,

strengthened by the overwhelming opinion, as expressed by Co-operative Conferences held during the year, hereby declares the urgent necessity of Parliament providing an Old Age Pension for every citizen." A pathetic element was added to the debate which followed by the emphatic opposition of the venerable Mr. Holyoake. He regarded the resolution as an undesirable innovation—a departure from the Co-operative tradition. Let workers put by their own Pensions, was his contention, and "if workers had not sufficient wages to provide for themselves, what were the Trade Unions doing?" Deeply as the old man was revered, the co-operators felt that, however effective the work of Trade Unions, the day was still far distant when every working man and every working woman would be able to put by sufficient to provide a Pension for their declining years. The mind of the Congress, moreover, was already made up, and the resolution was agreed to with unanimity.

The Co-operative group had fallen into line with the Trade Union group. Both Congresses were unanimous in support of our demand. There now remained only the Friendly Societies group.

Mr. Holyoake's
vain appeal.

Second line
captured.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FIRST PENSIONS PREMIER

**Progress
abroad.**

While hard at work in the British Isles, we were glad to be reminded of the sympathy of other nations. The very same day on which Mr. Maddison was obtaining a unanimous vote in our favour from the Co-operative Congress, the International Federation of Miners, meeting in London, passed with similar unanimity a resolution in support of our policy. Three weeks afterwards, an Old Age Pensions Bill was introduced into the French Chamber of Deputies.

**In New South
Wales.**

But the progress of Pensions within the Empire naturally interested and strengthened us most. On December 11th, 1900, an Old Age Pensions Act was passed in New South Wales. This Act was notable in two directions: first, the maximum weekly allowance to all over 65 years of age and not possessing other means was *ten shillings*, the pension diminishing according to amount of other income; secondly, the pension was also bestowed on those at any age who were incapacitated for work by physical inability. This was forcing the pace indeed.

In Victoria.

Nine days after (December 20th, 1900) an Old Age Pensions Act was passed in the sister colony of Victoria, of not so advanced a character, giving 7s. a week to pensioners of 65 years, but also to persons of any age permanently ill through unhealthy occupations. The inauguration, twelve days later (January 1st, 1901), of the Australian Commonwealth opened up the prospect of a yet wider range of Pensions legislation at the Antipodes.

Even before copies of the Act had reached him, Sir Andrew Clarke, the Agent-General for the Colonies of Victoria and Tasmania, kindly promised to come down to Browning Hall on January 20th and outline the provisions of the new measure. His coming was made the occasion of offering a welcome to the Commonwealth of Australia. The Federation song, "Australia's Cherished Dream," was sung by a men's choir, led by the composer. The proceedings were solemnized

by the news of the approaching death of Queen Victoria. Copies of the Act had even then not yet arrived, and Sir Andrew had to describe the measure with the help of cable-grams alone. But he did much more than describe the new Act. "One of the wisest and greatest Empire-makers the world has ever known," as he has been called, the venerable statesman declared his adhesion to the principles for which we had contended. He said that in his opinion the only right plan was to give a Pension to everyone on attaining a certain age, to everyone alike, peer or peasant, without any exceptions; so that a man should feel that it was not a dole, or charity, but something which came to him of right, and which he might be proud to take, for the service that he had rendered to the State. If at 60—the age he preferred—a man and his wife would receive this Pension, they would be able to go from the crowded area of Walworth back to the villages, to pass the rest of their days. A lot of money would be required, but it would only be re-circulating amongst the people. It was a re-distribution.

This was another valuable indication of the way in which our demand appealed to the statesman-like mind.

On the Thursday following there took shape one of the many effects of our Pensions agitation which, though an indirect effect, ought to be at least mentioned here. While going up and down the country to attend the several Conferences, I had the privilege of travelling in company with Mr. Charles Booth, and of conversing with him on many other phases of the social problem. The Housing question was naturally touched upon. What Mr. Booth then said recurred to me as the 1901 election of the London County Council drew near. It seemed to me most desirable that Mr. Booth should state his views in such a way as to give guidance to the electors, before whom no leading idea had yet been placed. Mr. Booth at last consented to meet a select group of dynamic persons, and lay before them his conception of improved means of locomotion as a first step towards the cure of the housing difficulties of London. So began the Browning Hall Conferences on Housing and Locomotion. They were attended with the same extraordinary unanimity as had marked our Pensions Conferences. They led directly to the appointment of the Royal Commission on London Traffic, the reference to that body being almost a literal transcript of a resolution of the Conference. The Report of that Commission confirmed the chief proposals of the Conference. And it was the Browning Hall Conference on Housing, mobilised afresh in 1907, which led the London County Council to request, and

An Empire-builder's witness.

Browning Hall Conference on Housing.

the Liberal Government to grant, the rudiment of a Traffic Board. This movement, like that from which it sprang, was nurtured and enveloped in an atmosphere of prayer.

**Address to the
Premier of
New Zealand.**

The Pensions movement in this country had received from the Antipodes so much of initiative and encouragement as to require, in our judgment, some public recognition. A suitable occasion arrived with the visit of our Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Edward Cadbury, to New Zealand. An address to the Premier of New Zealand was drawn up and signed as follows:—

BROWNING HALL, LONDON, S.E.

To the Right Honourable Richard John Seddon,
Premier of New Zealand.

SIR,—Will you permit those who are working in the United Kingdom for the amelioration of the condition of the aged poor to present an address of respectful congratulation to you, whose country has been the first State in the English-speaking world to create by law Pensions for its aged citizens? Your experiences are justifying a social reform which we have yet to obtain, and we find grounds for hope in contemplating your work. Ours is an ancient and wealthy nation, yours a young nation without (we believe) the extremes of wealth and poverty which disfigure our social life. But the young nation has had faith and courage, and has felt the charm of great ideas. It has recognized the duty of society to the individual, as well as that of the individual to society. Its social conscience has, in this matter, reached a higher point in ethical evolution than that of many an older race. Your initiative has been followed by Victoria and by New South Wales, and the creation of the National Committee of organized Labour is the direct result of your ideas working here. Of your personal share in moulding the life of your country we would say that it commands our admiration and respect, and we have taken the opportunity which the visit of our treasurer to New Zealand affords to offer you our congratulations and to assure you of our esteem.

Signed by—

**Notable list of
signatories.**

THOMAS BURT, M.P.

JOHN BURNS, L.C.C., M.P.

FREDERICK MADDISON.

GEO. D. KELLEY, Amalgamated Society of Lithographic Printers; Secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

W. A. APPLETON, General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Operative Lace Makers; President of the Nottingham Trades Council.

CHARLES FREAK, President of the Boot and Shoe Operatives' Union, Leicester.

JOHN BUCKLE, President of the Trades Council, Leeds.

O. CONNELLAN, Secretary of the Trades Council, Leeds.

GEORGE N. BARNES, Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

W. C. STEADMAN, L.C.C., Stepney.

TOM BRYAN, M.A., Chairman of the Public Health Committee, Southwark Borough Council; Sub-Warden, Browning Settlement, Walworth.

RICHARD BELL, M.P., General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, London.

WILLIAM COFFEY, Secretary of the London Consolidated Bookbinders.

Alderman C. W. BOWERMAN, Secretary of the London Society of Compositors.

ISAAC F. MITCHELL, Secretary of the General Federation of Trades.

PETE CURRAN, Chairman of the General Federation of Trades.

J. MADDISON, General Secretary of the Ironfounders' Society.

ALEXANDER WILKIE, General Secretary of the Associated Shipwrights' Society, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

JAMES HOLMES, Secretary of the National Hosiery Federation, Leicester.

ALLAN GEE, General Union of Weavers and Textile Workers, Huddersfield.

T. CHAMBERS, Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, London.

J. KEIR HARDIE, M.P.

BENJAMIN COOPER, L.C.C., Secretary of the Cigar Makers' Association.

J. MACDONALD, Secretary, London Trades Council.

JOSEPH EDWARD GREGORY, Chairman, London Trades Council.

S. WOODS, Secretary to the Parliamentary Committee, Trade Union Congress.

E. C. GIBBS, General Secretary, Amalgamated Society of House Decorators and Painters.

WILLIAM THORNE, General Secretary of the Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union.

JOHN WILSON, M.P., Durham Miners' Association.

CHARLES FENWICK, M.P., Northumberland Miners' Association.

J. V. STEVENS, Chairman of National Committee of Organized Labour; City Councillor, Birmingham.

ARTHUR W. EADES, Secretary of Birmingham Trades Council; Hon. Secretary, Birmingham and District Old Age Pensions Committee.

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, Secretary of the Labour Representation Committee.

M. DELLER, National Association of Operative Plasterers.

J. MACPHERSON, National Union of Shop Assistants.

MARGARET BONDFIELD, National Union of Shop Assistants.

ROBERT WAITE, Hon. Secretary, National Committee of Organized Labour, Birmingham.

EDWARD CADBURY, Treasurer.

F. HERBERT STEAD, M.A., Warden of Browning Settlement, London.

FREDERICK ROGERS, Vice-Chairman of Conciliation Board, London Chamber of Commerce; Secretary of National Committee of Organized Labour.

Mr. Seddon's
reply.

The address was duly presented, and acknowledged in the following reply :—

PREMIER'S OFFICE,

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.

October 16th, 1901.

GENTLEMEN,—It was with feelings of profound gratitude and great pleasure that I received the address sent to me from Great Britain. It falls to the lot of few men who tread the path of duty to find during their own lives even a partial realization of their higher aims. That happiness has been mine; and when to this is added the praise and sympathy of those who, each in his own sphere, are leaders in the cause of human progress, I feel that words are unable to convey my sense of the great kindness which prompted you to send your message of sympathy over seas.

If New Zealand has been able to act as pioneer in the first practical effort to ameliorate the condition of those upon whom the weight of years and lack of worldly success have fallen, it is doubtless owing not only to the courage and sense of responsibility of her citizens, but also to the habits of colonial life. I allude to the spirit of comradeship which is

engendered in men thrown together under circumstances of common danger and hardship. In older countries where the grades of society are more strongly marked, and the presence of indigence is terribly perceptible, the task of protecting and assisting the aged poor is much more difficult than it is here. The names of those men, however, who are prominent in the struggle to bring Old Age Pensions within the realm of practical politics in England are sufficient guarantee to all earnest souls that ultimate victory is assured.

That I have been enabled to take a part in moulding the destiny of this young nation is, in my estimation, a source of honourable pride. I do not affect to despise the good opinion of my fellow creatures, and, if my strength permits, I hope to continue my efforts in the direction of "trying to leave the world a little better than I found it." Your kind words in their beautiful setting will be treasured not only by myself, but by my family and friends after me, and will serve to show that there is a thread of kinship round the world not only of blood relationship, but of mutual sympathy and unity of high ideals.—I am, gentlemen, yours fraternally,

R. J. SEDDON.

Frederick Rogers, Esq.

(and other gentlemen signing the address), London.

The tribute which British Labour had thus paid to New Zealand was not only a just recognition of service rendered to the cause of progress : it also enlisted in our cause the best elements in the Imperialism which then filled the air. We thought it well to remind the public that whatever enthusiasm might be roused by the alacrity of the Colonies to spring to our aid on the field of battle, a nobler enthusiasm was due to much more important services on the field of social reform. Newspapers gave great publicity to both address and reply.

The nobler Imperialism.

CHAPTER XXVII

MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND THE FRIENDLY SOCIETIES

**Why Mr.
Chamberlain ?**

After this pleasant little Colonial episode, we must refer again to the attitude of the then Colonial Secretary. The reader may feel that an apology is due for our frequent reference to the varying utterances of Mr. Chamberlain, and may object that the turnings of that statesman's mobile mind are a matter of psychological and personal rather than of public and practical interest. A word of explanation is necessary.

**Why not
Mr. Balfour ?**

The Unionist Government was in power. Any hope of Pensions legislation must, for several years to come, be realized, if realized at all, by that Government. But members of that Government had, rightly or wrongly, come to the conclusion that Pensions were peculiarly Mr. Chamberlain's subject: that he had made it his own: and that if the Government took any action in the matter, it would be on his initiative, and by his direction. I tried hard to appeal past Mr. Chamberlain to Mr. Balfour. We did what we could to lay the sad lot of the aged on Mr. Balfour's conscience, and to induce him to make it his special business. If only his sympathies could be roused, and his tenacity of purpose set round the need of the old folks, we should have, it seemed to us, better prospect of getting something done. Mr. Balfour, unfortunately, would not rise to his opportunities. The result remained that so far as Old Age Pensions were concerned the Government was Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Chamberlain was the Government.

**A curious
speech.**

This fact invested his utterances with an importance which they did not intrinsically possess. Other importance it would be hard to find in his speech to the Annual Conference of the National Order of Oddfellows in Birmingham on May 29th, 1901.

To begin with, he objected to the phrase "Old Age

Pensions." He preferred to speak of "proposals to assist men to make provision for old age."

He next declared that "the matter had gone back." War-blinded. Military and Imperial pre-occupations had evidently left him ignorant of the unparalleled progress which had been made, and of which all the preceding pages are witness.

He wanted to see "a new start taken": to put the matter "again upon its legs." He appealed to the officials of the Friendly Societies "to take the matter up as if it were a new question, not prejudiced by anything that might have been said or done before."

The first consequence he predicted would be: "We should hear no more of a universal Old Age Pension." That he believed was absolutely impracticable. No Chancellor of the Exchequer would find the money. A universal Old Age Pension would destroy independence, and it would discourage thrift. Here, again, absorption in other pursuits had evidently prevented Mr. Chamberlain observing the testimony of experts in the Trade Union world, and the arguments of Mr. Booth, both of which proved that a universal Old Age Pension would have exactly the contrary effect: it would promote independence and encourage thrift.

Then he adumbrated a suggestion in the words: "In the interests of the State it might be desirable to lighten the burden of an Old Age Pension, but above all I would desire to lighten it *by the aid of and through the organization of the Friendly Societies*": and again he appealed to "the officials" "to work out some scheme of old age provision in which, assisted by the State, a Pension at a fixed age might be secured to those who had contributed towards it." The crucial words I have italicised.

He again pressed on the Friendly Societies to frame a scheme, and then to present it to the politicians. He wanted to get rid altogether of the political character of the movement.

His last words were the best: "I do not believe that as a political movement it has any chance of success. It has only a chance of success if it is a great social movement." Therein he spake truly.

From these somewhat desultory remarks of the right hon. gentleman, it appeared that Royal Commission, Committee of Experts, Select Committee of the House of Commons were not enough.

There must be a new consideration by a delegation of Friendly Societies. Cynical observers were ready to suggest that this was only another device for shelving the question.

A prediction that proved false.

A bid for the Friendly Societies.

But this appeal to the Friendly Societies, and especially to the officials of the Friendly Societies, is capable of another interpretation.

The three groups of organized Labour.

Mr. Chamberlain had in the first instance, in advancing an insufficiently thought-out plan of State-assisted Pensions, appealed to the working classes as a whole, and particularly to "the thrifty and provident working men who put their savings in Trade Union, Co-operative Society and Friendly Society." He knew as well as we that these were the three great organized groups that contained all the most effective elements in the Labour world.

Trade Unionism: ours.

Of these three groups, the Trade Union group was the first to declare itself. As we have seen, it would have none of Mr. Chamberlain's ill-defined contributory scheme. Trade Unionism went solid for a universal Old Age Pension.

Co-operators: ours.

Next came the Co-operative group. Essentially thrifty, essentially provident, co-operators could hardly be classed with reckless bribers of the electorate, or with favouring any policy that would destroy independence and discourage thrift. But, as we have seen, the Co-operative Congress would have none of Mr. Chamberlain's contributory plans, but in the name of ten million members, just the day before Mr. Chamberlain's speech, voted solid for a universal Old Age Pension.

The Friendly Societies, his last hope,—

The Friendly Society group was all that remained as yet unavowed. If this third group pronounced against him, like the first and the second, there was an end to his "promise," "scheme," "proposal," "suggestion," "proposition,"—call it what he would. It was his last line of defence. Naturally he laid great stress upon it, and appealed to it with great emphasis.

We, too, had from the first known and recognized the essential importance of the Friendly Societies. They were invited to all our Conferences. They did not at first respond as numerously as did the Trade Unions; but their numbers had increased as the movement advanced, until at the Conferences representing the Midlands, the West of Scotland, and the East of Scotland, respectively, their delegates far outnumbered the Trade Unionists. Moreover, the official valuer of the great Order of Foresters, Councillor Hudson, of Leicester, was on our Committee and Executive from the first. Then, too, we knew, as indeed is obvious to anyone, that the groupings might be different, but the *personnel* in all the groupings was largely the same. The men who were in Friendly Societies were not largely other than the men in the Trade Union or in the Co-operative

Society. The unanimous support we had among the Trade Unionists and co-operators involved very extensive support, to say the least, among the Friendly Society men. We knew we had with us from the first the vast majority of the rank and file of members of the Friendly Societies.

The rank and file: but not at first the official heads. In station or in sympathy those at the top of the great Orders were held to be more of the middle class than of the working class: and they shared the middle class prejudices to a greater extent.

Hence becomes clear the strong emphasis which Mr. Chamberlain placed on "the officials" of the Friendly Society movement. They, at all events, had not succumbed to the pestilent heresy of a universal Pension.

It was round the Friendly Societies, therefore, that the The stake of
battle. fight now gathered: the Friendly Societies were to decide between contributory and non-contributory systems.

At once our staff set to work. A leaflet was drawn up which we ventured to think was decisive and unanswerable. Its dynamic effect justifies its insertion here:—

WHY WE SHOULD NOT SUBSIDIZE THE FRIENDLY SOCIETIES TO GET OLD AGE PENSIONS.

1. Because the population of the United Kingdom is over 40,000,000, and the number of members of registered Friendly Societies is, according to the latest official return, only 5,217,261 it would be unjust to tax forty millions to endow five.

2. Because upon their own valuation, based upon their own figures, many Friendly Societies are insolvent on their Pension side, and it is bad statesmanship to endow financial insolvency. At the last published valuation of the Manchester Unity—the most stable of all Friendly Societies—it was shown that 55.14 per cent. of the lodges have an actuarial deficiency—that is to say, would not, according to Government actuaries, be able to meet the demands which might be made upon them. In 31 per cent. of the lodges it was proved that the proportion of assets to liabilities is less than 90 per cent. In Stepney (a district consisting almost entirely of the working classes) 26 lodges out of 46 were proved by the Unity's actuaries to have deficiencies. At the last published valuation of the Ancient Order of Foresters 76½ per cent. of their courts showed estimated deficiencies. According to the Treasury Committee there are 28 Friendly Societies with a membership of 2,214,620, and with 21,293 branches. Of these branches 12,448, or 58

And notably
"the
officials."

per cent., show a deficiency. If the State endows Friendly Societies it must guarantee their solvency, control their management, and *ipso facto* create a privileged and pauperized class.

3. Because in many parts of the United Kingdom Friendly Societies do not exist. In districts where wages are very low they do not flourish. The reason is obvious. The men whose weekly wages are insufficient for their weekly needs cannot find the money to pay into a Friendly Society. These being the poorest, would need an Old Age Pension most, would pay their share of the tax to provide it, and—through no fault of their own—could make no claim to it.

4. Because a large number of people are unable to join a Friendly Society as they cannot “pass the doctor.” But they might live as long and fulfil the duties of citizens as completely as other persons, and would also pay their share of the tax to provide Pensions. So we should have those who were—by medical verdict—not of sound health obliged to pay for the Pensions of the healthy, and debarred from Pensions themselves.

5. Because a large number of the worst paid of all workers, namely women, are excluded from many Friendly Societies because they are women, and from many others because their wages are too low for them to afford the subscription.

6. In a word, because it would mean taxing the ill-paid labourer to pension the well-paid artizan, taxing the weak to pension the strong, taxing women to pension men, taxing the many to give a privilege to the few.

7. Because the only equitable system of Pensions is that which draws the Pension fund from local and Imperial taxation combined. To such a fund all would contribute in the days of their vigour, and from it all might claim in the days of their decrepitude.

A leaflet that did its work.

We printed 100,000 copies, and put special energy into the distribution. As Mr. Rogers reported :—

“Copies of this leaflet were distributed to all the leading newspapers, and it was largely reprinted in their columns. Every member of the House of Commons received copies. Every clergyman in Scotland, established and not established, had copies sent, while the Scotch Committee, with their accustomed energy, circulated 15,000 copies among the lodges of Friendly Societies. Each of our centres had quantities for distribution in their various districts. At

every bye-election, candidates who agreed with our ideas were offered our literature free of all charge save carriage, and much was spread in that way."

A futile endeavour was made to elicit an expression of opinion from the Friendly Societies in favour of a State-aided pension. A conference was convened in London for the purpose, but the great Orders held aloof. As their leaders pointed out, it was not for them to forestall the discussion or decision of the National Conference of Friendly Societies, which, it was pointed out, was the "duly organized and recognised body among the great Friendly Societies" for the purpose of taking cognisance or action on matters of collective interest.

The Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress towards the end of the year (1901) resolved, if it were possible, to bring the three great Labour groups into line at once. It set about negotiating a Triple Conference on Old Age Pensions. It was baulked of its full purpose, for the Friendly Societies, with characteristic caution, declined the overture. But the Co-operators, having already declared their policy, acceded. Invited jointly, therefore, by Trade Union Congress and Co-operative Congress, a large and influential conference met in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, January 14th and 15th, 1902. It was a historic occasion, for it was the first time the two great Congresses had in this way officially combined. Two individual Friendly Societies were represented, 74 Co-operative Societies, 12 Trades Councils, and 118 Trade Unions. Mr. Steadman, of the Trade Union Congress, presided on the first day; Mr. Benjamin Jones, of the Wholesale Co-operative Society, on the second. Our own National Committee was well represented. Mr. Rogers moved the first resolution, condemning all contributory schemes. Mr. Frederick Maddison moved the second resolution in favour of a universal Pension. His was a strong and manly speech, in which, among other things, he boldly declared that if the man who made the prostitute was not debarred the pension, the prostitute herself should not be debarred. Mr. Waite seconded. The third resolution declared that pensions should be provided by Imperial taxation. The fourth fixed the age limit at 60. The fifth the amount at 5/-. All these resolutions were carried unanimously.

Here was another great advance. Both Congresses had affirmed jointly what each had affirmed separately. Confirmation strong.

An incident of personal interest occurred at the close of

Mr. John Burns.

this Conference. Up to this moment Mr. John Burns had not connected himself with our movement. He had been frequently adjured to do so. Little more than a year ago I had called upon him and urged him to join the National Committee, and take a leading part in the work. As I was impressing upon him with every emphasis in my power what I felt to be his duty, he cried out, "Stead, man! you're talking like a prophet!" I answered—maladroitly—"Then give me a prophet's hearing." He did—by disregarding my message. I was grieved to think that, when the rest of us were forming up, he stood outside.

But at the close of the dual Conference he came over and was promptly voted on the Executive.

In March the third great group declared itself. The National Conference of Friendly Societies met on the 20th in Manchester, and gave their answer to Mr. Chamberlain's appeal :—

"There were present at the Conference representatives of 33 societies with a total membership of 3,670,798, and funds of £26,522,864. The debate on Old Age Pensions, began by Mr. W. C. Bunn, of the Hearts of Oak Society, London, moving a resolution affirming that 'it is the duty of the State to provide a scheme of Old Age Pensions, commencing at the age of 65, of not less than five shillings a week, and that to entitle any person to such pension he must show that he has been a member of a thrift society for at least 20 years.' Mr. Pembury, of the Bristol Foresters, moved as an amendment, 'That, in the opinion of the National Conference, State-aided pensions would be detrimental to the best interests of Friendly Societies.' The amendment was defeated by a majority of two to one. Mr. Duncan, of the 'Rationals,' then moved a further amendment, 'That this Conference, representing three-and-a-half million members, is of opinion that it is the duty of the State to provide an old age pension of not less than five shillings a week to all thrifty and deserving persons of 65 years of age and upwards who are unable to work, and in need of the same, and that such a scheme shall place no disability of citizenship upon the person claiming the pension, and that the cost of the same shall be raised without any interference with the funds of the thrift societies.' This was accepted by the Hearts of Oak, and became the substantive resolution, and was finally carried by the Conference by a majority of three to one."

The National Conference of Friendly Societies.**Mr. Chamberlain answered.**

Rarely has so decisive or so crushing an answer been given to overtures from such an influential person as "the most powerful Minister in the most powerful Government of

modern times." Mr. Chamberlain had appealed to Cæsar, and Cæsar had non-suited the appellant. Mr. Chamberlain had besought the Friendly Societies to put their heads together and devise a scheme. They had done so: and this statement of principle was the first result. Mr. Chamberlain's suggestion was that of the State contributing to pensions "by the aid of and through the organisation of the Friendly Societies." And they would have none of it. In this respect Friendly Societies fell into line with Trade Union and Co-operative Congresses, and formed one unbroken front—against Mr. Chamberlain.

So far as the united voice of organized Labour, speaking **A triple doom.** through its three official organs, meant anything, it meant that all contributory schemes were doomed.

True, the Conference was not unanimous. True, the Conference did not support a universal pension. It imposed the restrictions of need and desert. But, remembering all that had gone before, the approximation of the Friendly Societies to the position jointly held by Trade Union and Co-operative Congresses was most striking and impressive. The curve was moving towards coincidence with our own straight line.

This defeat of Mr. Chamberlain was not on political grounds. He himself had insisted that the question should be kept out of the political region altogether. His opponents took up no partisan attitude. Our committee was as non-partisan as ever. But Mr. Chamberlain had identified himself with the contributory principle, and so had to share in its discomfiture. In 1899 he had acknowledged that all *compulsory* contribution must be renounced. In 1902 he had been shown by the very tribunal to which he had appealed that *all* contributory schemes must be abandoned. In this point the victory of the National Committee was complete.

Mr. Rogers, in a trenchant foreword to the terse array of fact and argument which he published this year (1902) under the title of "Society and its Worn-out Workers," summed up the situation thus:—

"So that, with variations in points of detail, the public opinion of organized Labour all points one way. It is only the politicians who stand across the path, and they will do so just as long as the British voter chooses to let them. The dynamic force which can move them lies in the popular will. The democracy has either to drive or to be driven. The politicians lead or will follow, as the people choose to let them. If the facts here set forth are emphasized and insisted upon in political circles, Government *must* act before

"They can govern the Nation."

long. The Old Age Pensions movement belongs to no political Party, it stands for principle and for principle alone. And it points the way to a new departure in political organisation, for if the Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, and Friendly Societies can follow the lines which it has laid down, and can come to a working agreement among themselves on behalf of social reform, they can govern the nation."

A deepening synthesis.

These concluding words suggest a wider extension of the synthesis which our movement had brought in its train. Consequently, or at any rate concomitantly, we have seen Trade Unionists close their ranks, the Labour Representation Committee formed, Trade Union and Co-operative Congresses combining for the first time in history, and the Friendly Societies converging to the same goal.

The suppliant hands of venerable age seemed to be drawing the whole Labour world into the unity of its embrace.



GEORGE N. BARNES, M.P.,
Chairman of the National Pensions Committee.

Printed by C.

E.—OUR BATTLE FOR THE BUDGET OF 1903

CHAPTER XXVIII

GEORGE BARNES, CHAIRMAN

The steady progress of the last three years had all been **Peace!** made under the shadow of the war-cloud. It had been made in face of mounting taxes, and of an expenditure that was running into the hundreds of millions. A more rapid progress was soon to become possible.

I was approaching the principal entrance to the Düsseldorf Exhibition—whither I had gone in June, 1902, to prepare the way for a visit later in the year of our Settlement Travel Club—when I saw a placard of the *Düsseldorfer Zeitung*, conveying the announcement of Peace in South Africa! The *Zeitung*, which of course I eagerly purchased, reproduced the *Daily Chronicle* telegrams, forestalling by a day or two the official intelligence of the peace concluded at Vereeniging.

What a world of new hopes fluttered up in my heart as I scanned the brief news of the Exhibition sheet!

Now was our opportunity.

After Peace—Pensions! had long been our cry. With peace at hand, Pensions were at once practicable.

This was the dominant thought in the mind of the National Committee as it gathered at Browning Tavern on Saturday, July 24th, 1902, for the despatch of its annual business. Intense energy and determination was the note of the proceedings. The resolve was taken that the Organizing Secretary be instructed to prepare plans for a winter campaign, if possible of national dimensions, to insist that taxation be maintained at a level such as to

**Mobilizing for
Pensions.**

facilitate the securing of Pensions for all next year. A sub-committee was charged with the instruction to draft a Bill embodying its demand, and to submit it to a special meeting of the National Committee, with a view to its being introduced into Parliament.

At the same meeting we regretfully received the resignation of Councillor Stevens, who from the first and for more than three years now had filled the post of chairman of the committee. We remembered the admirable way in which he handled the great Conference at Birmingham. We also recalled his gallant electoral combat with the chief opponent of universal Pensions. We made such acknowledgment as we could in a resolution of gratitude, of these and many other highly appreciated services.

Who was to take his place? At once occurred to my mind—as soon as I knew of the vacancy—the thought of my earliest comrade in the movement, who had stood with me when Mr. Reeves first expounded the New Zealand Act, whose aid I first invoked, and who had been a tower of strength in our struggle ever since—Mr. George Barnes. I proposed him in his absence, and the committee empowered me to invite him to the chair.

National and International opportunities.

I called twice at his house the same evening, but failed to find him at home. A day or two after, he called on me, and I pressed our request upon him. I urged on him the unique opportunity now before us of scooping Pensions out of the war taxes. There was another consideration which weighed with me, and I hoped would weigh with him. The Governments of the world had favourably entertained a proposal from Russia to meet in conference on the question of Trusts. Capital, which knew no Fatherland and respected no frontier, had been boldly organizing itself on a colossal international scale, and the suggestion was that only by international agreement could the Governments of the world keep the new power within legitimate limits. This Conference on Trusts did not come off. But, I urged, if the Governments of the world were even thinking of combining to control organized Capital, they must more and more rely upon the forces of organized Labour. This possible combination between rulers and workers was a hint of further developments of the utmost importance for the future of mankind. Now organized Labour in this country had crystallized for effective combination around the question of Pensions. On Pensions the British Labour world had solidified into a unit. The office of head of the National Pensions Committee had in it potencies beyond its immediate aim.

These were some of the ideas current at the time, which found expression a few weeks later in a meeting of English and German working men at Düsseldorf.

Whatever may be thought of the premises advanced, the practical conclusion was eminently satisfactory. Mr. Barnes consented to be our chairman, and has from that date to this been the Labour statesman to whose hands, in country and in Parliament, the Pensions movement has been principally entrusted.

The exceptional and distinguished position which he has held in our movement, and which has become more manifest to the eyes of the nation in its latest Parliamentary stages, make it necessary here to give some account of so useful a career. George Barnes began his apprenticeship in the engineering line in London when he was 13, completing it five years later in Dundee. At 18 he set out from home as an independent workman, and followed his trade for fifteen years in Scotland, Lancashire, and London. Needless to say, he was a strong Trade Unionist. His abilities and the confidence he inspired won for him an ever-increasing influence in the councils of his craft. In 1892 he was promoted to a post in the general offices of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. After holding this office for three years, he returned to the workshop for a year or two. Then, in 1897, he was elected to the proud position of General Secretary to the A.S.E. That organization is, if not the strongest, one of the strongest Trade Unions in the world. It contains some 100,000 of the ablest and best paid and the most trusted of British workmen. It is also one of the compactest and best disciplined of our industrial armies.

Mr. Barnes owed his position in the Labour world, and now in the larger national arena, to none of those arts which the terrified imagination of the employing class is apt to associate with the successful Labour leader. He is no lurid demagogue or platform incendiary or wily panderer to the passions of the mob. His speeches are as innocent of turgid rhetoric as of claptrap; they show as little trace of truculence as of sycophancy. Their note is commonsense touched with emotion and governed by conscience.

Mr. Barnes charms his hearers by his transparent sincerity, his evident desire to get at the facts, his practical earnestness, and his broad human sympathy. Here, you feel, is a man of level head, large heart, and lofty principle, with resolute convictions of his own, yet fair-minded to those who differ from him; above all, a genial brotherly soul. In

**Life-story of
George Barnes.**

**A potent
character.**

a word, it is in his character that his power lies. In the conduct of the A.S.E. he had an ever-increasing demand for the exercise of his distinctive qualities.

Ever learning. The scant schooling of his earlier days has been more than made up by the wide reading and travel of his maturer life. He is a great admirer of John Bright, a diligent student of his speeches, and he is also a reader of Ruskin; and, thanks to his initiative, the A.S.E. has made several levies for the support of Ruskin Hall, at Oxford. He takes care to keep himself in touch with the current of periodical literature. He has paid several visits to Germany, and closely studied the conditions of German Labour. He was also a member of the Mosely Commission, and contributed his report on a comparison between American and British Labour. He is an enthusiastic advocate of improved education, technical and general, both for workmen and masters. He is convinced that Britain in competition with other nations suffers most from the lack of suitable training in the directors of industry. Early in his career he was actively associated with the Land Reform Movement initiated by Mr. Henry George. To all the leading social reforms he has given frank and sustained support.

Home and Faith.

Like most British Labour leaders, Mr. Barnes has not denied himself the privileges of domestic life. Mr. Barnes's birthday is always celebrated by a children's party, and the sight of the great Trade Unionist romping with the youngsters on that festive occasion might reach the heart of even the most militant capitalist. Another glint of the man's inner life appeared one day when, in addressing a company of working men, he deplored the fact that the general movement towards reform had come to a standstill, and he asked from what quarter were we to look for fresh impetus for the cause of progress. It would not come, he said, from the clash of parties or the conflict of economic forces. It certainly would not come from the ethical societies with their chop-logic. It would only come through the bursting forth afresh of those religious instincts which remain deep and indestructible in the heart of the masses of the people. Similarly, in the papers which he has contributed to the journal of the A.S.E. appear many glimpses of poetic, almost of mystic, insight.

A cohesive soul.

Mr. Barnes has a singular knack of finding the man behind the partizan and the opponent, and of winning the friendliest esteem from those with whom he may be industrially or politically at variance. He has distinctly synthetic gifts. He is essentially a cohesive personality.

The diffusion of his spirit has formed a sort of vital cement to solidify the new edifice of industrial unity in country and in Parliament.

We looked forward with great satisfaction to the prospect of Mr. Barnes entering Parliament. For we felt that he represents a new and sorely-needed type of statesman. He is the product of a newly-discovered school of statesmanship. For compare with his the traditional training of our legislators. What is the course at Eton or Oxford beside eight years spent in assisting to administer the affairs of a great national organization like the Amalgamated Society of Engineers? With its huge body of members, holding in their hands for better or for worse the industrial efficiency of Great Britain, that body is a State in itself, and its head must be no mean master of statecraft. The nation is beginning to learn that in those who have graduated in the management of our great Trade Unions there is a reserve of statesmanship which will stand us in good stead when Parliament ceases to be a bedlam of babblement, and becomes a real workshop for the shaping of such measures as will promote plenty at home, peace abroad, and happiness everywhere.

A new type of statesman.

**The Pensions
Premier.**

The Colonial Conference was at this time meeting in London, and one of the most popular of the Premiers from oversea was the Right Hon. Richard Seddon, affectionately known even here as "Dick Seddon." He was everywhere in demand, chiefly on the more flamboyant themes of Empire. But he was the first Premier in the Empire to enact Pensions: and the National Committee, who had (as will be remembered) sent him an address of congratulation on that achievement, invited him to tell the old country how the great experiment had worked. Mr. Seddon kindly agreed to speak at Browning Hall on July 30th (1902). So it came to pass that from the very same platform on which Mr. Reeves had expounded the Act immediately after it had passed the New Zealand legislature, we heard its responsible author describe the first four years of its operation.

**Mr. Seddon at
Browning Hall.**

The New Zealand Premier met with an enthusiastic reception from a crowded hall. He was careful to insist at the beginning that no resolution should be submitted which dealt with the policy of home government. He was not there to interfere with politics. Old Age Pensions did not form one of the subjects before the Colonial Conference. But it was a question of humanity. He was carrying out the wishes of the New Zealand pensioners in making their system known. His people would be glad if they could come to the help of the aged in the Mother Country just as they had sent their sons to the defence of the Empire on the battlefields of South Africa. The pensions in force in a population under 800,000, including Maoris, who shared in the benefits of the measure, numbered 12,405. The cost in 1901 was £197,292. The charge for administration was £2,415. The Act as it was passing through Parliament was bitterly opposed. He himself had been kept at the table of the House 187 hours in defending it and carrying it through. They decided not to impose special taxation, but to place the charge of pensions

on the general revenue of the colony. They also agreed that those who did not need a pension should now have it offered them.

Could England, asked Mr. Seddon, bear the burden of Old Age Pensions? If they had known when the war began that it was going to cost them 260 millions sterling, they would have stood aghast. But they had borne the burden. So he was certain that if these pensions cost eight millions a year, as had been calculated, England would find the money. When the honour of the nation, and justice to the aged poor, were concerned, the question was above all consideration of mere money sacrifice. This statement was greeted with loud cheers. As an old Oddfellow, he ridiculed the idea that any man or woman would be thriftless simply because at some future day he or she might receive a pension of 5s. a week. Besides, the poor must be kept. The question was to a large extent one of relieving local rates and throwing the burden on the Imperial revenue. No one doubted that they must succour helpless infancy: there was equal, if not greater, claim to assist indigent old age. He believed that a country that did its duty in these questions of humanity would be blessed. New Zealand had prospered, and was to-day more prosperous than ever. At the last election not a single candidate proposed the repeal of the Act.

These observations of the New Zealand Premier are still of living point and interest.

As he spoke, one noticed how, when face to face with a working class audience, Mr. Seddon soon abandoned the talk of war and Empire which had won such transports of applause elsewhere, but here encountered a mixed reception. He showed himself the genuine Labour statesman, the man of the people, in his own proper environment. Around him were a number of some of the best known British Labour leaders.

His visit alone would have made the meeting memorable. But Mr. Charles Booth was in the chair. And it was indeed interesting to see, side by side on the same platform, the pioneer of Pensions at the Antipodes, and the pioneer of as yet unachieved Pensions in the Mother Country.

But this notable conjunction was not the most significant feature of the evening. For at that meeting Mr. Booth launched the battle-cry of our next campaign, the cry which resounded through the country for ten long months of resolute struggle: "Pensions before remission of taxation!" This was Mr. Booth's survey of the progress of the movement given in cool and quiet manner, as though describing with

**A blessing on
the nation.**

**Conjunction of
Antipodes.**

exactness the elucidation of some intricate problem in mathematics, but with more than mathematical cogency. For the audience felt the grip and the glow of the practical purpose which lay behind this seemingly unimpassioned exposition :—

Position of Pensions. “ The interest in the question of Old Age Pensions never flags, and the principles on which, if at all, they should be granted have gradually become clearer, with the result that there is now very little divergence among those who advocate any measure of the kind.

Views past and passing. “ There are still those who object to every scheme, but they can no longer rely on differences of opinion among their opponents.

“ These differences, which seemed to be so deep, and which until reconciled or overruled paralysed all action, concerned the qualifications of desert and need; and behind these questions lay a third regarding the encouragement or discouragement of thrift that might result.

“ One side, as the outcome of schemes more complicated, but to the same effect, proposed to meet all three points at once by basing pensions exclusively on Friendly Society membership. Those who took this side held that to be a member of one of these societies was a sufficient certificate of worthiness, and of that suitability of social position which took the place of need, and pointed to the encouragement which this important form of thrift would receive.

“ These views have passed. I need not reproduce the arguments to which they have yielded. It is enough to say that the members of these great societies, though still divided on the larger question of pensions or not, are practically agreed in refusing to be made a privileged class.

“ Abandoning this solution, or as a modification of it, it has now been suggested that proof of thrift, whatever the form it might take, should be one, though not the sole, test of desert, and a quite low income limit, the test of need or suitability as regards class. This position is now largely held.

For just and unjust. “ The opposite party—that to which I myself belong—proposed to deal with the questions of desert and need, by ignoring them, and were able to show reason for favouring this course. Pensions, they held, should be for all, falling like rain from heaven on the just and on the unjust, and on rich and poor alike, old age being the only qualification, and, as to the effect on thrift, argued that a small certainty in the future would become the nucleus round which savings would gather, and would not depress or supersede, but tend to stimulate thrift in a manner better and more widely effective than any direct bonus.

"These two proposals as they now stand are less far apart than at first sight they appear to be, and at every approach to practical action they converge.

"As to the question of desert the difference is hardly more than this: Shall a man win a pension by proving desert, or forfeit it by having given proof of undesert? The most thoroughgoing advocate of pensions for all never suggested that confirmed paupers, or those who are practically inmates of prisons, should be supported at the public charge in later life in any new way. Pensions would not be for them. While the strongest believers in the policy of discrimination will hardly deny that to have been self-supporting and to have retained independence into old age is a pretty fair test of desert among the poor. Moreover, it would be found in practice that the test adopted must be simple in character, uniform in its incidence and easy of application, and such a test Poor Law and prison records alone would supply. The question of desert is thus reduced in practice to the extent of prison experience or the degree of pauperization which should disqualify. Hence it is evident that the bottom limit, or the line below which pensions should not be given, covers no rock on which a practical scheme would founder.

"As to the upper limit which defines need or suitability there is also convergence, the difficulties in the way of fixing any line are considerable, and some simple solution must be sought here also. To fix as the basis a low maximum income from all sources would involve objectionable inquiries, accompanied by suspicion of, and temptation towards, false declarations. There would be danger lest the character of the pensions should suffer from this. It might even be that some of the most respectable poor would decline to apply at all. Pensions so given might carry a taint worse than that of pauperism. To put the maximum income rather high would be less dangerous. Some practical plan for this might be found if such limitation be desirable, in any case, which I doubt. The point is, however, not an important one, and certainly involves nothing which could wreck the general scheme.

"The larger question remains—Is the provision of pensions in old age seriously demanded by the nation as a whole, and (as proof of this) is the nation willing to pay for them?

"The cost of any satisfactory scheme will be great, and in old days we used to be told that the surplus of revenue was insufficient for so large and so sudden a demand, and that to impose fresh taxation would seriously and most undesirably

Question of
desert.

Income limit.

Is the nation
willing?

upset the basis of taxation. The argument was not without force at the time, but where is it now?

“ We owe it to the war that the old financial equipoise is gone. Now we can, and indeed must, make a fresh start. The opportunity is a great one.

“ The questions which will lie before the coming Chancellor of the Exchequer are not solely those of Imperial expenditure and national revenue, for they are now inextricably mixed up with local taxation. Old Age Pensions, as benefiting most directly the poorer classes, and as lightening the local pressure of the Poor Law, might, perhaps, provide a useful balance weight in the adjustment of burthens.

“ But the question before us is solely—Do we as a nation want, and are we as a nation prepared to pay for, this measure? It will follow that if the nation does demand it, and if Parliament reflects its wishes, the measure will be carried; and, however the burthen may be adjusted as between different classes or different interests, Old Age Pensions will come first and remission of taxation later.”

**Two stout
Imperialists.**

Of copies of this speech, large numbers were subsequently printed and distributed. At the same meeting Mr. Will Crooks, then Mayor of Poplar, not yet Member for Woolwich, advocated intensive Imperialism in his own inimitable way. It was good to see two Imperialists close together of such different brand as Dick Seddon and Will Crooks. The latter said to the people: “ You created this great Empire; you have all got a bit in it. You are proud of it. And if you only voted through the ballot-box as you display your enthusiasm at public meetings, we should have had Old Age Pensions long ago. We are a wonderfully patriotic nation. I have seen you Mafficking, and if you only ‘ mafficked ’ for Old Age Pensions, Chamberlain would give them to you to-morrow. Twenty-six millions are spent every year on the Poor Rate. Eleven millions of that goes in purposes connected with the poor. Buildings, furniture, offices taken out of it leaves you five millions for the poor. It’s a pretty big sieve for it to get through. Only you pay and don’t know it. The aged poor don’t get it; but somebody else does who has got a pal. Now, we’ve got to be pals to the aged poor, and see that they get something, because they’ve helped to make a great Empire for us.”

**The trumpet
call.**

The next thing was to prepare a manifesto for universal distribution. The first draft of it was despatched from the

shores of Gare Loch, whither I had been banished on grounds of health. Each time I recall its putting together, I feel again the thrill of long pent-up energy, the glowing hope with which it was written. As finally revised, and approved by the committee, it ran as follows:—

TO THE WORKING PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

WHY NOT OLD AGE PENSIONS IN 1903?

"We have got the money for them now. The present revenue can bear the cost. The taxes now flowing into the Treasury are sufficient to supply, over and above the ordinary expenditure, a free pension for every aged person in the United Kingdom.

"Taxation has been forced up for war. It must be kept up for pensions. The nation has stood the strain of increased expenditure involved in the South African struggle. The nation can still stand the same strain for the sake of saving a million and more aged Britons at home from disfranchisement and pauperism, from the ignominy of 'charity,' or from actual starvation.

"A prominent statesman has declared all we have spent on the late war to be but a trifle to what we could spend in case of need. The claim for remission of taxes, therefore, cannot stand for one moment against the prior claims of the Aged.

"Next year the Government must either take off taxes or apply them to other uses. The Government can apply them to the honourable support of the Aged and grant Universal Pensions at a stroke.

"But the most willing of all Governments could not take this bold step unless it was certain beforehand of overwhelming national support. Many interests which are much louder but far less worthy will clamour for the surplus revenue. Taxpayers of all kinds will bring powerful pressure to bear in favour of immediate remission of taxes. Unless still greater pressure is exerted in favour of pensions, the Government will yield to the rival claims, and we shall have missed the great opportunity of securing pensions for all without imposing one penny of additional taxation.

"But if you, working men and working women throughout the nation, assert your overpowering strength and issue to the Government a mandate not to be gainsayed, there is no reason why pensions should not be enacted next year.

"The question is one which concerns you above all others. It is your old people who have to face the horrors of indigence.

The pressure of taxation comes in the last resort upon you. And you form the immense majority of the nation.

“Your most responsible and most trusted representatives have repeatedly declared in favour of pensions for all in old age, not as a dole, but as a civil right. The Trade Union Congress has thrice carried unanimously resolutions to this effect. The Co-operative Congress has twice done the same. The National Conference of Friendly Societies has officially demanded for every aged person, who is at once needy and worthy, a free pension from the State. This agreement among the three great bodies of organized Labour is unprecedented. It is certainly most impressive. Now is the time for you to make it effective.

“Now is the time. Everything depends upon what is done by you this winter. If you do your utmost you may see achieved ‘The Old Age Pensions Act, 1903.’ If you are slack or timid, you will almost certainly never have such a chance again.

“To work then and at once! Write to your Members of Parliament, and let them know that any vagueness or shuffling on this question may lose them the working class vote at the next election. Enlist the help of your local Press. Hold public meetings, and, wherever possible, town’s meetings convened by the Mayor. Appeal to the churches to follow the noble example of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has promised to vote for our demand. Influence where you can the local councils of either Party.

“Put Pensions before Party. The fate of more than a million old folks on the brink of destitution is now at stake. That is of infinitely greater importance than the fleeting fortunes of any Party. Pensions are not a Party Question.

“The watchword for this decisive winter was given by Mr. Charles Booth, when Mr. Seddon told at Browning Hall of the success of Old Age Pensions in New Zealand,—

“PENSIONS FIRST: REMISSION OF TAXES LATER!

“Lose no time in letting that cry be heard from the heart of the nation, and next year will see Old Age Pensions secured.”

Fifty thousand copies of this leaflet were disposed of. Mr. Rogers sent round an urgent appeal for funds to the trade and other societies, and concluded in sentences characteristic of the whole circular: “The time is ripe, the organization ready; and all we want is funds to create an agitation that will make our victory sure.” So, tense, eager, expectant, we launched on the winter’s agitation.

CHAPTER XXX

THE WINTER'S AGITATION AND OUR DRAFT BILL

The demands of the National Committee were from the **Various views of our policy.** first regarded in some quarters as daring exceedingly. To claim pensions for all seemed the height of audacity. But now that the war was over, and the patient taxpayer was counting on some relief from his aggravated burdens, to step in between him and the fulfilment of his hopes, to insist that war taxes should not be taken off until every aged person had a pension from the State appeared the sheer insanity of boldness. The immediate increase of taxation due to the war chiefly consisted of an extra sevenpence in the pound on the income tax, a duty of threepence a cwt. on corn, fifty pence a cwt. on refined sugar, and an export duty of a shilling per ton on coal. Coal owners and miners united in anticipating the repeal of the coal tax: the general consumer counted on the withdrawal of the duty on sugar and corn. And there was the great middle class hungrily awaiting the reduction of the income tax. What power could avail against such a combination? Some taxpayers went so far as to say that our proposal was a fraudulent attempt to misappropriate to one purpose imposts that had been levied for another! And official financiers went further, and spoke of our policy as madness.

But we were quite convinced that if our demand, Pensions first, remission of taxes later, had been referred to a plebiscite **The people with us.** the working class vote would have carried it by an overwhelming majority. In the absence of a referendum we had to make such shift as we could by means of public meetings and other recognised ways of expressing the national mind.

The Trade Union Congress, which held its session in 1902 in the fierce glare of London life, again and unanimously affirmed its demand for universal Pensions.

Our committees all over the country were busy arranging meetings, or obtaining resolutions from public bodies assembled for more general purposes, or impressing local M.P.'s with their views.

Opening the campaign.

The P.S.A. Brotherhood that meets in Browning Hall resolved to open the London campaign in a way worthy of the place where the movement originated and of the high service to which they had been called. I shall never forget the passionate earnestness with which our comrades in Walworth responded to my appeal. They resolved to rouse the Borough of Southwark for a town's meeting. And they did. They worked like galley slaves, distributing handbills and leaflets from door to door and from street to street. A thousand women, too, connected with the Settlement were stirred. They would not be behindhand in demanding a pension. Anyone who thought of the working womanhood at the base of the social scale as a sodden, dull, inert mass of unintelligence would have had a wholesome surprise if he had seen the enthusiasm of these Southwark women. They were the first at the doors, more than a hour before the meeting began. The profounder Influence which is to these surface efforts what the Gulf Stream is to the ocean wave, was persistently and passionately invoked.

Southwark roused.

October 20th was a wretchedly wet and sloppy night; but so intensely had the borough been moved that the large public hall, holding about 2,000, was crowded out. The Mayor presided. Practically all the local leaders spoke or wrote in support of our demand. It is interesting to recall what was said at that meeting by those who are now members of Mr. Asquith's Government. Mr. Causton, M.P., supported the resolution moved by Mr. Barnes and seconded by the Unionist Mr. Hastings Medhurst, "That the enactment of Old Age Pensions should precede any substantial reduction of taxation." Captain Cecil Norton, M.P., supported the demand advanced by Mr. Rogers of pensions for all as a civil right. Mr. Macnamara, M.P., wrote: "I am in favour of Old Age Pensions being granted to all, and I promise to vote for Pensions first and remission of taxes afterwards." The local Church was not behindhand. Dr. Talbot, then Bishop of Rochester, wrote a letter of sympathy. Dr. Bourne, then Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark and afterwards Archbishop of Westminster, wrote that he agreed with Cardinal Vaughan in supporting every effort for the welfare of the aged poor, and he added: "I wish you every success in the efforts you are making." The enthusiasm of the meeting was unbounded. The winter campaign had opened splendidly.

Then we brought out a leaflet entitled "A Four Years' Fight for Old Age Pensions as a Civil Right: a diary of the progress of the movement from despair to the brink of attainment." Ten thousand copies were distributed. The

“facts” in this condensed form did indeed “count for more **More meetings.** than rhetoric.” The Southwark resolutions were carried at excellent meetings in Brixton (November 13th), over which Rev. Bernard J. Snell presided, and in Dr. Horton’s church at Hampstead, when Mr. Crooks, with his inimitable pathos swept local members of the C.O.S. into the unanimity which here, as everywhere, supported our twofold demand. At a similar meeting held in Poplar Town Hall (November 19th, 1902), Mr. Sidney Buxton, M.P., afterwards to become Postmaster-General in Mr. Asquith’s Government, declared that the principle to be adopted must be a universal one. Mr. Rogers obtained identical expressions of opinion from meetings in Clitheroe and Chorley.

We were badly handicapped in this winter agitation by the absence in America of most of the British Labour leaders. **Message from Niagara.** Mr. Mosely had no evil design against our movement, but his luring away to serve on his Commission so many of our doughtiest champions had an effect of which we were painfully conscious on the progress of the agitation. To make up in some measure for their absence, and to strengthen our hands at home, the twenty-three Labour Commissioners signed and sent the following manifesto. It is dated Niagara Falls, November 19th, 1902:—

“After four years of discussion and consideration there is now no doubt as to the mind of the nation concerning Pensions for the Aged Poor. Every organization of Labour with a right to speak on the subject has spoken, and has affirmed that Old Age Pensions are a national need. We know we are expressing the opinion of the great body of workers when we say that legislation on this subject should precede any substantial reduction of taxation! The Government have the money, the war taxes have furnished it. Next year’s taxes will either be remitted or used for different purposes. No purpose so concerns the well-being of the nation as the saving of a million and more aged Britons from starvation and misery. It is the next important step in social legislation. It is more far-reaching in its consequence than anything in party politics, and stands outside and above all political parties. It has been described as an idea that should unite ‘good men of all parties,’ and with this description we entirely agree, and though absent from England would urge on our fellows to relax no effort to support the agitation which aims to make pensions for the aged become the law of the land.”

As Mr. Mosely endeavoured to get the most representative leaders of British labour on his Commission, the weight is obvious of this deliberate declaration of their judgment.

High pressure.

With our limited resources in staff and the sinews of war, the strain of the agitation had been telling heavily on Mr. Rogers, and about the end of November he completely broke down. He had to seek health in the far South-west of England, while the fray went on. Settlement work meanwhile was peculiarly exacting. Every nerve was being strained to clear off the debt on the new Browning Clubhouse, opened during the summer : and one of the most acute seasons of distress was beginning in Walworth. But the extra work entailed by Mr. Rogers's absence had just to be shouldered—that was all. Sunday, December 7th (1902), for example, was a full day. After service in the morning I hurried over to Dawes Road, Fulham, where, with the Mayor in the chair, I urged our duty in respect of Old Age Pensions on more than a thousand members of the P.S.A. which meets there. I hastened back to Walworth to conduct my Greek Testament class while I was getting tea. Then I went off again to Battersea to a meeting presided over by the Mayor, and addressed by Mr. John Burns, M.P.

**Mr. John
Burns.**

After my speech—which the reporters were unkind enough to say lasted an hour—Mr. Burns spoke. He enlarged on the wastefulness of the present Poor Law system. During the previous year he said £2,329,355 were spent on indoor pauperism. Of that amount the poor inmates received only £923,378 for maintenance. £597,000 went in rations for officers, £385,000 in repayment of loans, and £440,000 in other expenses. During the same year Mr. Burns reported that it had cost 8s. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head per week at the workhouse, 10s. 6d. at Tooting Home, and 17s. 9d. in the infirmary. Let them take this as being something between 13s. 6d. and 13s. per head per week.

**Would spend
£20,000,000
a year.**

Mr. Burns proceeded then to outline what was wanted. He advocated a national pensions scheme, towards which rich and poor should contribute in proportion to their means. For a start, he would suggest 5s. a week to all over 65 years of age, the figures advanced by Mr. Charles Booth. Supposing there were a million people to receive these pensions, it would probably mean the spending of nineteen or twenty million pounds. He was prepared to vote for the spending of such a sum. He would do so with more cheerfulness than he had been compelled in the last three years to see 250 millions voted away for a war—a sum which, if capitalized, would yield an interest more than sufficient to solve the problem of Old Age Pensions twice over. The pension, he advocated, should be universal; rich and poor should be able to apply for it. Then upon no one could be imposed the stigma that they were

taking what other people could not have. He did not believe that everybody entitled would accept it. The experience of Trade Unions had shown that the dishonest men and the malingerer were in an insignificant majority. He thought the certainty of a pension in old age would be a stimulus for men to save by all reasonable means during their earlier years.

This visit to the Battersea Labour League revealed Mr. John Burns to me in a new light. He showed himself amongst his disciples of the Labour League not so much the politician or the popular orator as the pastor: he was the shepherd amidst his flock. The personal inquiry after each one, and the endeavour to suggest means of help where help was needed, brought out the kindlier and almost paternal nature of the man.

We were now in the full tide of our winter agitation. What it meant for the future was perhaps more vividly realized by its enemies than its friends. The nation, as events have proved, was gravitating towards practical unanimity on the question. But there were some opposed elements, few and meagre, yet by astute organization and diplomacy able to turn their exiguous forces to effective account. The Charity Organisation Society naturally took up its habitually negative attitude. But its opposition was more than usually pronounced. For the postulate of pensions as a civil right would be a terrible blow to that system of merit as a condition to carefully guarded doles which the Society enforces with the legalism of the Rabbi and the ruthlessness of the inquisitor.

Of the fears it entertained I had a piquant reminder. A leading member of the Society waited on me one afternoon before a Pensions meeting. He was very friendly, but his earnestness was almost impassioned. He adjured me to halt in my reckless career, as he regarded it. Under the influence of strong emotion he exclaimed:—

“Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Charles Booth, and you have brought the nation to the brink of ruin, and if you do not stay your hand it will be hurled into the abyss!”

I was startled at the vehemence of the speaker, and even more at the unexpected conjunction of the three names. It showed that to his mind all schemes of State pensions were equally and entirely abhorrent. My endeavours to reassure him were in vain.

On the testimony of friends and foes alike we had the **Our Draft Bill.** nation with us, whether to precipitate it into the abyss of disaster, or to launch it on an unmeasured course of social

**John Burns
as Pastor.**

**Advocates of
“Don’t”
alarmed.**

progress. The time had now come to throw into statutory form the demand which the nation had resolutely and repeatedly expressed. A special meeting of our National Committee was accordingly convened at the Temperance Institute, Birmingham, on February 7th (1903), to consider a draft Bill which I had the honour to draw up and submit. The Bill had, like everything else that we proposed to print, been first brought under the notice of Mr. Charles Booth and the sub-committee. There were a large number of members present. Clause by clause was carefully considered, and in the end it was unanimously adopted in the following shape :—

A BILL TO PROVIDE PENSIONS FOR THE AGED.

(As approved by the National Committee of Organised Labour at Birmingham, February 7th, 1903.)

“ BE it enacted by the King’s most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :

“ 1. The Treasury shall, on and after the first day of October, in the year of our Lord 1903, cause to be paid five shillings a week to every British subject, male or female, applying in the appointed way, and certified to be not less than 65 years of age, excepting such persons as

“ (a) Are domiciled outside the United Kingdom ;
“ (b) Were born outside the United Kingdom and have resided less than twenty years in the United Kingdom prior to application ;

“ (c) Are under police surveillance ; or

“ (d) Have, on conviction of crime been sentenced to deprivation of pension.

“ 2. Everyone desiring to receive a pension under this Act

“ (a) Shall apply to the Registrar of Births and Deaths in his district (1) in person, or (2) in case of the applicant’s physical incapacity, in prescribed and attested form ; and next

“ (b) To the Superintendent Registrar of the same district in like manner ; and

“ (c) Shall, on satisfying them as to his qualifications, receive from them, along with a pension receipt book, a signed certificate to the effect that he is a duly qualified pensioner.

“ 3. Any applicant who is refused a pension certificate by the Registrar may appeal to the Chairman of the County Council of the county, or to the Mayor or Lord Mayor of the county borough in which he is domiciled. The decision of

the aforesaid Chairman, or Mayor, or Lord Mayor, shall be final.

“ 4. The pensioner shall,

“ (a) On appearing in person on the day prescribed at the Money Order Office which is nearest his domicile, and on presenting his pension certificate and receipt book receive his week's pension.

“ (b) The pension may be paid to a person representing the pensioner only when there is presented along with his pension certificate and receipt book a certificate of illness signed by a duly qualified medical man, or of legitimate absence from home, signed by a county, or borough, or urban, or rural district councillor.

“ 5. If the pensioner becomes chargeable to the Guardians of the Poor as an inmate of workhouse, or workhouse infirmary, or asylum, his pension shall be paid over to the Guardians of the Poor responsible for his maintenance, during such time as he continues to reside under their care.

“ 6. If a pensioner be convicted of any crime he shall forfeit his pension

“ (a) If he is imprisoned, during imprisonment; or

“ (b) Where no imprisonment follows, for such period as the convicting court shall determine.

“ 7. This Act shall be administered in accordance with regulations which may be issued from time to time by the Local Government Board, always provided that wherever the help of local administration is needed, the aid of county councils, the councils of county boroughs, borough councils, or committees of the same be invoked.”

As was pointed out at the time, the aim of our Bill was to put in the simplest form our main contention, that pensions are for all, and that only the obvious exceptions need to be specified. Beyond the primary fact of age, we specified no qualification. We only specified the few disqualifications. The principle uppermost in our mind was that a pension is a civil right, and should be intermitted only where other civil rights are forfeited or withheld. This principle has been adopted in the first Old Age Pensions Act. But, alas ! in the Act the exceptions have been numerous, arbitrary, and perplexing. The main idea.

The machinery of Pensions suggested in our Bill is also marked by the utmost simplicity. During the first three months, when a million or more pensioners would have to be registered, the Registrar-General and his subordinates throughout the kingdom would be equal to the strain, for Machinery simple.

they overtook the much greater difficulties of the ordinary census. Nor did we think it needful to institute any pains or penalties. Anyone endeavouring to obtain a pension under false pretences would be punished by the same laws which now punish other attempts to defraud.

Difficulties obviated. The case of sailors and travellers, which had caused law-makers and bill-makers some trouble, was made quite simple. Any sailor or traveller over 65 years of age only needed to show that his domicile is not outside the United Kingdom in order to receive his pension certificate; and only required a certificate of legitimate absence from a municipal councillor to enable some representative to draw his pension for him during his stay abroad. This principle also has been adopted in the main in the Act of 1908. Scrupulous care was taken to exclude anything but what belonged to a money Bill pure and simple, in order to obviate committee work in the House of Lords. We felt that the simple provisions of our Bill would help to commend the simplicity in principle and application, which is one of the chief merits of universal pensions.

Immediately after this Bill was passed by the National Committee, it was backed by John Burns, Thomas Burt, Charles Fenwick, John Wilson of Durham, Richard Bell, and Daniel J. Shackleton.

No foothold for Peers. At the Birmingham meeting our constitution was reduced to definite form in the following rules:—

“ 1.—The name of the Society shall be ‘THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR.’”

“ 2.—Its object shall be the creation, by legislative enactment, of a national system of Free State Pensions for aged citizens, such pensions to be a civil right, which may be claimed by any citizen, male or female, who is not a criminal or alien.

“ 3.—Its membership shall consist of district committees, which are in agreement with the policy of the National Committee, of subscribing societies and subscribing members. Each district committee shall elect its own officers, and shall have the power, on affiliation to the National Committee, to elect one member to the Executive Committee.

“ 4.—The society shall be governed by an Executive Committee, subject to the control of the annual meeting. The said Executive Committee to consist of all the officers of the society, and of persons elected by the district committees.

“ 5.—The officers of the society shall be a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, two Hon. Secretaries, and an Organizing Secretary.

“ 6.—The Executive Committee and all officers of the

society shall be elected annually at the annual meeting of the members and subscribers of the society, and shall have power to add to their number.

“ 7.—The Executive Committee shall meet as often as may be required for the transaction of business.

“ 8.—Every individual subscriber shall be invited to attend, and every subscribing society shall be invited to send delegates, and every district committee shall be invited to send delegates to all general meetings.

“ 9.—No alteration of these rules shall take place, except by an annual or special general meeting, and not less than one month's notice shall be given of such alteration.”

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ATTITUDE OF LIBERAL LEADERS AND THEIR LABOUR MEN

**A callous
Parliament.**

Our demand was now put into shape for legislation. It had behind it the practically unanimous support of organized Labour. It had secured the mandate of the great mass of the people. It had reached the threshold of Parliament. We had, so to speak, overrun almost the whole of the territory in dispute. We had carried line after line of the opposing outworks. Now our attack was directed on the central citadel itself. We laid siege to the House of Commons.

The Parliament of 1900 was by no means composed of the material that is most vulnerable to social appeals. It was elected primarily, if not exclusively, to back up the Government in "fighting to a finish" in South Africa. It embodied the patriotic pugnacity of the nation. It was feverishly responsive to the claims of extensive Imperialism. To those of intensive Imperialism it was, if not stone deaf, decidedly hard of hearing. "The present House," said one of its Members, "is certainly very much interested in—motors!" The Opposition was almost equally indifferent. A new Member who has since taken office under a Liberal Government said to me shortly after he had entered the House of Commons: "The Liberals are, as a whole, a most disappointing lot. They are not interested in the things that you and I are interested in. They care nothing for pensions, or housing, or the unemployed." It was not easy to find what they did care about—except the miserable quarrels which rent their attenuated ranks and still further reduced them to impotence. The winter of 1902 to 1903 was one of the severest distress in South London and elsewhere. Night after night I was engaged, with my fellow-workers, in administering such scanty relief as we could obtain for the starving poor. Day after day our hearts were torn by sights

**Deaf to the
cry of the
poor.**

and stories of hunger and cold. Famine-smitten mothers gave birth to children in rooms that were fireless and furnitureless, without blanket or sheet to cover their limbs. Starving men and women and children were all about us—and starving, shivering old folks. Yet when we turned from this seething agony of the people to the Party that claimed to be the Party of the people, what did we find? Impassioned eagerness to come to the help of the suffering populace? Heroic subordination of all personal ambitions and sectional pursuits, in the resolute endeavour to devise means of relief? Not a bit of it. The chief energies of that Party appeared to be absorbed in the momentous discussion whether “a furrow” or “a tabernacle” was the more appropriate metaphor for their fissiparous leadership. The country might be excused for wondering whether there was any leader to lead, or, in fact, whether there was any Party to follow.

The Opposition, whatever its politics, is generally a convenient instrument for rousing an otiose Government to a lively sense of the perils of inaction. It is in normal circumstances the natural resort of those who wish to force the hand of the dominant Party. But, alas! the circumstances were not normal. Official Liberals showed as little sign as did official Unionists of yielding to anything except popular pressure on the one side and on the other dread of being forestalled by their rivals. The effective will to help was not apparent in either of the historic Parties.

**Both Parties
indifferent.**

But there were other groups which might fairly be expected to prove of service. How far the expectation was justified we shall show later.

First of all, however, we resolved to bombard the whole House of Commons through the post. Towards the end of 1902, Mr. Rogers being off duty and on sick furlough, I wrote to every Member of the House, enclosing our printed matter, pointing out the opportunity offered by the next year's Budget, and asking for an answer to these two pointed questions:—

**Every Member
written to.**

“Will you vote for the enactment of Old Age Pensions prior to any *substantial* reduction of taxation?”

“Will you vote for a Bill to make a free pension from the State the Civil Right of every aged person who is not disqualified by crime or recent alien origin?”

The response we received was thus epitomized by Mr. **Replies.** Rogers:—

“Forty-seven of the six hundred and thirty Members replied, twenty-two in the affirmative, ten in the negative, and the rest are best described by Bunyan's character who was named 'Mr. Facing Both Ways.' Our correspondence

was not, however, entirely thrown away even upon those who did not reply, as just about that time the provincial Press bristled with paragraphs and short leaders on Old Age Pensions, which, it was manifest, were inspired by our circulars."

**W. S. Robson,
M.P.**

Two of the letters received came from men who have since taken office in the Liberal Government, and may be quoted as revealing something of the official mind of the then Opposition. Sir (then Mr.) W. S. Robson, M.P., wrote me from 26, Eaton Square, S.W., on December 11th, 1902, as follows, communicating his letter at the same time to the Liberal newspapers, where it appeared under the scare headlines, "Taxing the Food of the Underfed in the Name of Charity":—

"Dear Sir,—I have received your postcard inviting me to vote for universal Old Age Pensions prior to any substantial reduction of taxation. In my opinion the new taxes on food must be repealed before any fresh expenditure is incurred, or, indeed, whether any fresh expenditure be incurred or not. I am in favour of Old Age Pensions, but I am not in favour of buying them by taxes on the food of the underfed poor. That is a price there is no need to pay. There are no doubt large and powerful classes who would be delighted to see Old Age Pensions given to the poor on these terms. Land-owners who want a tax on imported corn, and sugar refiners who want a tax on imported refined sugar, will, no doubt, acclaim your suggestions with very intelligible philanthropy, but I am sorry to see the National Committee co-operating with such allies. They will easily improve on the policy you have declared. They will invest the taxes on food and trade with a halo of philanthropy derived from the generous object to which they are applied, and then it will be a simple matter to increase them. Sixty years ago the Party now in power crippled our trade and starved our poor in the name of national prosperity. Now, with your help, they will do it in the name of national charity. The motive, however, will be the same, and the effect will be the same. You neither share the motive, nor desire the effect, but if you pursue the policy you now suggest you will share the evil responsibility.—Yours faithfully, W. S. ROBSON."

A Boomerang.

Read in the light of our previous record, and still more in the light of subsequent events, this letter is certainly amusing. We had just emerged from a victorious struggle with Mr. Chamberlain over the policy of organized Labour in general, and of the Friendly Societies in particular. Yet Mr. Robson speaks of the very people whom we had worsted as our "allies," and predicts that "with our help" they will

re-impose Protection. The last sentence is delightful. "If," he says, "you pursue the policy you now suggest, you will share the evil responsibility." We have pursued the policy we then suggested, and pensions have been enacted—by a Free Trade Ministry of which Mr. Robson is a member. We accept the responsibility, but does Mr. Robson consider that responsibility to be an "evil" thing?

The obvious evasion of the point at issue had at once to be pointed out in my reply, to which equal publicity was given:—

Exposing the Evasion.

"Sir,—Mr. W. S. Robson, M.P., in his letter of yesterday seems to have entirely overlooked the word 'substantial' in our plea for 'universal Old Age Pensions prior to any substantial reduction of taxation.' It was precisely to obviate such criticism as that of Mr. Robson that the word 'substantial' was introduced into our question. The new taxes on food would be repealed without reducing the present level of taxation below the point which would cover the immediate enactment of pensions. The National Committee of Organized Labour is not committed to any scheme of taxation. It is supported by men avowing very different fiscal opinions. It exists, not to propound a preference for certain sources of revenue, but to insist that pensions for all should be paid for by all through the national taxes, and that the time has now come to embody that principle in legislation. It follows that the National Committee does not necessarily stand by any one of the existing forms of taxation, but that it does insist that whatever readjustment is decided upon the level of taxation shall not be lowered to a point which would make the immediate enactment of pensions impossible. The National Committee will be satisfied if universal pensions are secured; the battle over the particular system of taxation which the nation in its wisdom shall adopt is one with which the National Committee has, as such, no collective concern.

"I note with pleasure that you, Sir, in your leading columns declare of our policy that 'the argument is sound, and the tactics are good.'

"Mr. Robson has not merely overlooked the significance of the word 'substantial.' He has omitted to inform us whether he will vote 'for a Bill to make a free pension from the State the civil right of every aged person who is not disqualified by crime or recent alien origin.' This is an omission which I hope he will supply without delay.—Yours, etc., F. HERBERT STEAD, Hon. Secretary to the National Committee."

Mr. Robson's letter was, in fact, characteristic of official

Liberalism as we found it. One line to say "I am in favour of Old Age Pensions," and twenty-four lines to add: "But . . ." and to show why the one plain way to the adoption could not be taken. Vague and brief assurances of sympathy, precise and copious explanations why nothing should now be done.

A specious pretext.

Another perversion of the issue which is suggestive of middle-class politics must be noted. The taxes that were remitted next year were fourpence in the pound off the income tax, and the duty on corn and flour. The yield of the four-penny income tax was ten millions, and of the duty on corn two and a half millions. In answer to our demand for pensions before a substantial reduction of taxation, Sir W. S. Robson says nothing about the income tax, which of course supplied the enormous preponderance of the available surplus, but thrusts the two and a half millions of the corn duty to the front, and charges us with endeavouring to get pensions by taxing the food of the people. I need not refer to the taxes on sugar which the Liberal Government left unrepealed during its first two years' tenure of office, and only partly repealed in the third year; or to the taxes on tea which were only reduced a penny a pound by Mr. Robson's colleagues. Any criticism passed on us in respect of the sugar and tea taxes applies equally to the Liberal Government of which Sir W. S. Robson is a member. In fact, that Government *has* enacted pensions before remission of these taxes on food, and Sir W. S. Robson and his colleagues come under his own charge of "taxing the food of the underfed in the name of charity." As the sequel showed, the real question was, Shall pensions be enacted before the income tax is reduced? Under the pretext of defending the food of the poor, Sir W. S. Robson was really defending the well-to-do income tax payer.

Herbert Gladstone, M.P.

The other letter was from Mr. Herbert Gladstone. He wrote also on December 11th:—

"Dear Sir,—I have yours of the 9th inst. I am certainly in favour of the principle of Old Age Pensions, but I do not pledge myself either to time or method of dealing with it. I note you say there is a unique opportunity next year, owing to the cessation of the War demand on our existing revenue. I disagree with this. There will be a heavy demand for years to come on account of the South African War, and, as a consequence of it, expenditure on both the Army and Navy is likely to rise very considerably.—Faithfully yours, H. GLADSTONE."

Here, again, events have dealt hardly with the right hon. gentleman's logic. For, as a matter of fact, the Budget of

next year showed a surplus of over ten millions sterling. It would require some courage to affirm that such a surplus did not constitute "a unique opportunity," or that it was not "owing to the cessation of the War demand." Here, too, was the usual profession of positive principle and negative practice.

A much more robust and satisfactory answer came from Mr. Reginald McKenna, M.P., who was not then, however, included in the official circle of Liberal leaders. He wrote, on December 11th, 1902:—

Reginald
McKenna, M.P.

"Dear Sir,—It is difficult to give a definite reply to both the questions addressed to me by the National Committee of Organized Labour on Old Age Pensions. I am in favour of Mr. Booth's scheme, and if this statement is of assistance to the Committee I am very glad to make it. But I should not put the claim for Old Age Pensions as stronger than that for the reduction of taxation on the necessities of life, bread, sugar and perhaps tea, or than that for the abolition of the coal tax. You may consider these reductions as *substantial*, and if you do my reply to your first question would be in the negative."

From Irish Members we received a very warm assurance that the Irish Party was in respect of Pensions, as in all domestic questions, heart and soul with the Labour Party. With the representatives of Labour, therefore, backed by Irish Members, lay our principal hope. Even the twenty-two who had signed our pledge were of themselves a body of men numerous enough, if only determined enough, to force our demand upon the attention of the House and to insist on a division. It was just in the possibility of this direct challenge, which we had reason to believe was dreaded both by official Unionism and official Liberalism, that our chance stood of obtaining Pensions. The Session which was to decide the momentous issue was opened on February 7th (1903). It was at once evident that the Government meant to do nothing for the aged. There was not a word about Pensions in the King's Speech.

The Irish
M.P.'s.

The first weapon available was in the debate on the Address. An amendment might be moved expressing regret at the omission of any promise of Pensions. I at once endeavoured to arrange for such a motion. I appealed to the Trade Union group. All its members were avowed supporters of our demand and of our policy.

The Liberal
Labour group.

But I found, to my surprise, that they were by no means in a hurry to act. They seemed to regard Pensions as only one of a long list of reforms to which they were pledged.

They explained to me in a somewhat paternal manner that it was natural for *me* to think Pensions was the one reform to be pushed before all others: I had made it my special subject, and had pursued it with commendable concentration and absorption of purpose. But they saw matters in a broader light. They felt a difficulty in exalting pensions to a unique eminence when there were so many other questions demanding attention. Besides, every other man in charge of a movement talked and argued about the unique importance of his measure just as I did about mine. Then, too, as Free Traders they did not wish to offer any excuse for the retention of the duty on corn. I was to them only a man of one idea.

Myopia extraordinary.

I could not but inwardly smile—even if I chafed a little—at this estimate of the significance of our movement. I knew that time would vindicate—as it has vindicated—the correctness of our political perspective. But what Lord Rosebery and Mr. Asquith discerned and declared in 1908 was hidden from the Liberal Labour Members in 1903. Then I could not help feeling that they had been thoroughly disheartened by the long ascendancy of forces which they considered inimical to progress. To their way of thinking, no good thing could come out of Nazareth: no measure of popular reform could be extracted from a Khaki majority. And I gathered that they had come to resign themselves to a dependence almost complete on the Liberal Party. They appeared to be looking for initiative from Liberal headquarters, rather than to be developing and relying on their own initiative. They certainly did not reveal any eagerness for that prompt action which alone avails in dealing with the Address.

At Liberal headquarters.

Next day to my considerable surprise, I was invited to call at the offices of the Liberal Central Association for a talk on Old Age Pensions. I went, premising that our committee was entirely non-partizan and could be committed to no partizan policy. I briefly recounted the progress of our agitation, and indicated the volume of popular support behind it. I also took occasion to deal very faithfully with the shortcomings of official Liberalism. What I have just said in these pages, I said then, but even more pointedly. For my soul was hot within me, to see a great historic Party masquerading in the guise of friends of the poor and yet so manifestly indifferent to the vast masses of aged misery which lay like burning lava on our hearts. I was not sorry to bear such witness there, at the headquarters of what seemed perilously like an “organized hypocrisy.” Some

effect was apparently produced. For I was given the entirely spontaneous assurance, unlooked for and unasked for by me, that if Labour Members moved an amendment to the Address regretting the absence of any mention of Old Age Pensions in the King's Speech, there was every reason to believe that His Majesty's Opposition would support that amendment. Communication would, I was told, be made to Mr. John Burns to that effect.

A sign of grace.

This looked like business. I did my best to see Mr. Burns, but without success. Mr. Rogers and I tried, but in vain, to arrange for a Labour amendment of the kind desired. We found that a similar amendment had been put down by a Unionist Member. This was good news: for though it blocked a Labour motion it was ominous of a revolt in the Unionist ranks. But, alas! every amendment touching on Pensions was now rendered out of order—so we were informed—through the presentation by private Members of Bills dealing with the subject. The precious hours had passed during which our amendment would have been in order. If only the Liberal-Labour group had taken prompt action as we advised, then what we knew to be the national demand would have found voice in the Debate on the Address. They might have had a considerable Unionist following. They might also have had the support of the official Opposition. The display of protest might have sufficed to overcome the reluctance of the Government and secure, as one of the provisions of the Budget, an instalment at least of Old Age Pensions. For this course there was an important precedent. Free education was granted under Budget in 1891 by the Unionist Government without having been promised in the Queen's Speech.

Too late.

But we were foiled in our first attack.

Another disaster overtook us. The Bill which had been prepared by our National Committee and which was entrusted to the care of Mr. John Burns, fared badly in the ballot. It was allotted a place so distant as to be out of the range of any possibility of debate in the course of the session. An early night was indeed won for a Pensions Bill brought forward by Mr. Remnant, a Unionist Member; but his proposals were from our point of view very limited and unsatisfactory.

An unlucky Ballot.

So, after an uninterrupted series of successes, we had met with our first serious reverse. Victorious in the country, we had been baulked at the very entrance of our measure into Parliament. We could not raise the question on the Address. We could not get our own Bill discussed. We

A double Reverse.

were faced with the labyrinthine jungle of the rules and customs of the House of Commons. But we were quite sure that resolute men inside the House could hew their way through and provoke a debate, and take a division. We favoured the idea of proceeding by way of resolution. We discovered, however, that not the resolution, or the opportunity, but the resoluteness was wanted.

The Liberals' chance.

I was, of course, bound to report to the Liberal Central Association that the Labour amendment could not be moved. In doing so, I represented the singular nature of the situation now disclosed:—

“The working classes of this country are presented with the spectacle of a Government pledged to Old Age Pensions, but omitting all mention of them in the King’s Speech for this crucial session, and of an Opposition which you declare is unanimously in favour of Old Age Pensions allowing this omission to pass without a word. The only remonstrance comes from a Unionist Member, and his amendment is ruled out. The only Bill that has secured a possible night is one by a member of the Ministerial majority, and is not on the lines that the working classes have demanded.

“Surely if the Liberal Party wishes to put itself right with the working classes of this land, it will find some opportunity during this present session of raising the question of Old Age Pensions and of inducing the Government to reveal or develop its intentions in the matter.”

Promptly came back the reply that no statement had been made to the effect that “the Opposition is unanimously in favour of Old Age Pensions.” It might or might not be so: the writer simply did not know. But, he added, “A resolution in the House would determine it, and it is a pity that you did not get one of your avowed supporters in the House to move a resolution satisfactory to your Committee.”

Pie-crust promises?

This being precisely the course we wished to pursue, we made every effort to induce one of the most prominent of “our avowed supporters” to move a resolution. I personally waited on Mr. John Burns time after time in the Lobby of the House, laying before him the absurd contrast between the position of our movement in the country and in the House, and urging him to raise the question in the way suggested. After much conversation, Mr. Burns promised that he would call the attention of the House to the question “next Thursday.” Next Thursday came, and went, and the promise was unfulfilled. Again I saw Mr. Burns, and again he said he would bring the matter up in the House “next Thursday.” Again nothing of the

kind took place. Still I persevered, for I was glad to hope that Mr. Burns would be the man to voice in the House of Commons the demand of our National Committee. But week after week went by, and the same tale was told. The promise was not fulfilled. "Next Thursday" became like the Spanish "mañana," a morrow that was always coming, but never came.

Very regretfully I came to the conclusion that it was no use making any further appeal to Mr. Burns to advance our cause in Parliament. From that day to this I have never invoked his individual aid. Many a pleasant conversation has taken place whenever we chanced to meet, with much breezy banter from him, but there was no more attempt to secure his championship. The early weeks of the session of 1903 were made very sad to me by the discovery that for the promotion of our great cause I had henceforth to turn away from one I so loved and honoured.

If only there had been a Labour Parnell to head the movement in the House, what might he not have achieved! With even a score of pledged men behind him, with both Parties hesitating—more afraid of openly refusing, than even of assuming, the costly undertaking of Pensions, and seeking a coward's refuge in postponement—and with the enormous popular backing which had been elicited in the country, he might have played one Party against the other until he had won his will. Alas! there was no Labour Parnell.

0 for a Labour Parnell!

CHAPTER XXXII

DEFEAT

A new Labour man.

On the Parliamentary gloom which hung over our movement, a new dawn broke on March 11th. A new sort of Labour man entered the House of Commons. Will Crooks was elected by an overwhelming majority as Member for Woolwich. Of this hero and darling of the common people, there is no need to write the life or appraise the character. His rise from the position of an orphan workhouse boy to the front rank of Labour in Parliament has been described in innumerable periodicals, and has found permanent record in a published biography. His delightful personality has become the enrichment of all our public life. I have never met a man yet who hates, or even dislikes, Will Crooks. Firm as a rock in his adhesion to principle, he is as gentle as a woman, and as single-hearted as a child: and his overwhelming kindness sweeps away all possibility of bitterness. His mingled humour and pathos and dramatic power are well nigh irresistible; and though men may feel bound to vote against him they have often been constrained to weep with him.

A big "Mandate for Pensions."

As these pages have shown, Will Crooks was in our movement from its earliest stages. At the first meeting of the National Committee he and I were most resolute in urging that Pensions should be made a test question at all elections. He had done our cause splendid service on many a platform. At Woolwich he was opposed by a former Secretary of the Liberty and Property Defence League—a man who had declared that "thriftlessness and want of backbone are the chief causes of destitution of the working classes in old age," and that "working men do not want Pensions." The officers of the National Committee accordingly signed a manifesto calling on the electors of Woolwich, without respect of Party, to vote for "Crooks and Justice to the Aged." And when Mr. Crooks was returned by 8,687 votes against 5,458, he declared the result to be "an overwhelming mandate for Old Age Pensions."



WILL CROOKS, M.P.

His election was felt to mark a new era. Even *The Times* could say: "What it too clearly means is that the 'Labour movement' which has disturbed the balance of political Parties on the Continent has made itself manifest in a practical form here also, and that the nation at large, as well as both political Parties in the State, will have to reckon with it." Nowhere was the change marked by Mr. Crooks's arrival in the House of Commons more warmly welcomed than among the promoters of Old Age Pensions. From him we had no paternal warnings against over-zeal, or evasive promises. He was one of ourselves, heart and soul with us from first to last.

The Budget, which had been anticipated with so many hopes and fears, round the prospect of which our agitation for the last eight months had rallied, was introduced on April 23rd. The Government had a surplus of more than ten millions to dispose of. It repealed the duty on corn and flour, thereby sacrificing over two millions. It took 4d. off the income tax, thus making a present of ten millions sterling to the middle and upper classes. But there was not a penny for Old Age Pensions. The Government had made its choice. The opportunity was before it to make an important contribution towards the permanent relief of the aged, or to add to the comfort of the comfortable and well-to-do classes. And it deliberately chose the latter alternative. It left the aged in their misery. That choice branded the men who made it.

We could only enter our indignant protest. On May 12th was issued the following manifesto:—

"The National Committee of Organized Labour desire to record their emphatic condemnation of the action of the Government in refusing to use any part of the surplus on the Budget for the relief of the most helpless of his Majesty's subjects, the aged poor. With the exception of the corn tax, everything that has been done has been done in the interests of the well-to-do. The first step might have been taken to constitute an Old Age Pension system. It was a Member of the present Cabinet, the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., who said at Birmingham on December 6th, 1894, speaking on Pensions for the aged:—

"'A great scheme of this kind should not be proposed to Parliament until some Chancellor of the Exchequer shall come who shall have a surplus, not a deficit, to deal with. You will remember that we waited a long time for free education, but there came a time when, under the administration of a Chancellor of the Exchequer whom I will not name, there was

*Witness of
"The Times."*

*The Budget of
1903.*

*Indignant
protest.*

a very fruitful surplus, and that surplus was at once applied to give to the working classes the greatest boon that has been given them during my political time. My hope is that under another Administration, and another Chancellor of the Exchequer, we may return to a period of prosperity, to a period of surplus, and my hope and belief is that these surpluses may be used in order to stimulate the provision of those Old Age Pensions. ” ”

“ The Chancellor and the surplus have come, but not Old Age Pensions. The will of the people has been declared in every possible way. During the past five months meetings have been held in every part of the United Kingdom, at which resolutions were passed unanimously demanding Old Age Pensions before any substantial reduction of taxation. Some of these meetings were of immense proportions, and all were in the fullest degree representative. They are entirely ignored by his Majesty’s present advisers for the sake of the wealthier classes. This is simply class legislation in its worst form ; it is anti-national in its tendency, and is in direct violation of the promises of the last ten years. It was the Party now in power who told the nation that a better treatment of the aged poor was possible. The nation believed these words, and they have been miserably defrauded and deceived, and we still remain behind nearly every other nation in the civilized world in our clumsy and blundering efforts to solve this form of the poverty problem. And the leaders of the Opposition have been as silent as the Government have been inactive, and have proved conclusively, for those who needed proof, that Labour owes no fealty to either Party when questions of social reform are pressing for solution. ” ”

Uproar over Tariff Reform. Three days after this protest was issued came the famous speech at Birmingham (May 15th), in which Mr. Chamberlain launched on his raging and tearing agitation for Tariff Reform. Just when the leaders of Labour had set in strong relief the clear contrast between his promises and his performances, the right honourable gentleman plunged into the vortex which ended his career as social reformer and as responsible statesman. The national uproar which followed tended to drown all voices except such as shouted for or against the existing system of oversea trade. Both Parties showed a disposition to drop social for fiscal discussion. The immediate prospect of legislation in the interests of the aged was dimmed. For the Party in power looked now, as ever, to Mr. Chamberlain to give them the lead on Old Age Pensions, and would not act apart from his initiative. Initiative from him on that question was made highly improbable by his absorption in Tariff Reform.

This improbability became more clear in the debate in the House of Commons on the second reading of Mr. Remnant's Aged Pensioners' Bill. This Bill proposed to empower Committees of Boards of Guardians to grant pensions of 5s. or 7s. a week to the deserving poor at the age of 65. The cost was put at six and a half millions—three millions to come from the Treasury, three and a half millions from rates. From our point of view the Bill was defective, in limiting pensions to the poor and deserving, in connecting pensions with the Poor Law, and in drawing part of the cash from the ratepayer. Its sole importance lay in the debate which it excited.

Mr. Remnant's Bill.

Mr. Fenwick, among others, dealt faithfully with the Government in its repeated failures to fulfil the hopes it had excited. He urged the House to insist on the question being dealt with at once. A vigorous attack from Mr. Lloyd-George roused Mr. Chamberlain into a speech which has only a personal and almost obituary significance. Again he inveighed against universal Pensions as impossible and undesirable. The proposal which he first advocated had, he admitted, been rejected by public opinion, and was now "a dead question." "That having failed, he then turned his attention to the question how far progress could be made in the same direction with the help of the Friendly Societies," and he had urged them to contribute some scheme. "That really, in brief, is the history of my connection with this matter." Pensions were not dead: the chief obstacles were not insuperable. Before the Government could get any such scheme as that of Mr. Chaplin's Committee, which was estimated to cost ten millions, it must know where it was going to get the funds. Mr. Chamberlain ended by saying that though it might not be impossible to find the funds, "that no doubt will involve a review of that fiscal system which I have indicated as necessary and desirable at an early date."*

Mr. Chamberlain's speech.

Melancholy indeed is the spectacle here presented, of a statesman deliberately blind to the facts immediately before him. The Government, of which he was a leading member, had actually at that moment an estimated surplus as yet unvoted away of more than ten millions sterling. Yet Mr. Chamberlain said, before the Government could consider the scheme of Mr. Chaplin's Committee, which would cost ten millions, it must know where the money was to come

The main fact ignored.

* In a letter dated June 3rd, Mr. Chamberlain expressed himself even more strongly than he had done in the House of Commons. He said: "As regards Old Age Pensions, I would not myself look at the matter unless I felt able to promise that a large scheme for the provision of such pensions to all who have been thrifty and well-conducted would be assured by a revision of our system of import duties."

from. With ten millions in his pocket, so to speak, he says, "I think it may not be impossible to find the funds." But there is never an allusion to that outstanding feature of the situation. There is, however, the cry suggested of "Pensions by way of Tariff Reform."

Shelved again.

As that cry meant Pensions after Tariff Reform, it was the postponement of Pensions, so far as Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Chamberlain's Government were concerned, to the Greek kalends. Yet Mr. Long could claim that "that debate constituted a step forward on this subject." And *The Times* indulged in the comment, "The aged poor must not be too sanguine, but their prospects of relief seem to be definitely more promising than they have been at any previous stage of the discussion."

A conspicuous omission.

One of the most signal features of this debate, as reported in *The Times*, was the conspicuous absence of any allusion to the ten millions surplus then at the disposal of the Government, as a possible and immediate source of Old Age Pensions. Mr. Long remarked that the two sides of the House had come nearer together. They certainly seemed to be at one in the tacit assumption that the middle-class income tax payer must first be relieved, that the misery of the aged poor was not for one moment to be considered as against the greater comfort of the well-to-do. The ten millions represented by the fourpence on the income tax were there,—ready for the old folks, if the House chose so to decide. But not one speaker even hinted at this as a possible appropriation of the surplus. And Mr. Long could wax pathetic in declaring how strongly he felt the demand made, not only upon their sympathy but upon their Christianity, by the condition of many people in the country. He did not know any sadder sight than that presented in many of our country villages, "where men and women who had laboured to the utmost of their capacity, and had been sober, thrifty, and industrious, found themselves compelled at last to take refuge in the Poor Law." I have no doubt that Mr. Long was entirely sincere in what he said. But the fact remains that at that very moment he and his Government had wealth sufficient in their hands to give a pension of 5s. a week to three-quarters of a million old folks, and would not give it. They gave it instead to the middle-class tax-payer. That fact is about as odious a commentary on unctuous sympathy as one could well find in recent annals. The second reading was carried without a division, and the Bill politely shelved.

"They say, and do not."

Profession without practice.

An awkward Resolution.

But this gross discrepancy between saying and doing was not allowed to pass wholly without challenge. We now had in Parliament a representative who meant business, and meant it at once. Mr. Will Crooks gave notice of his intention to move on the second reading of the Finance Bill, "That no Bill will meet with the approval of this House which does not provide for the appropriation of the surplus at the disposal of the Government to the claims of the aged poor before all other claims for relief."

This resolution raised the issue in the most direct manner. It enabled every man in every Party who really wanted Pensions to register his convictions. But it was obviously an awkward resolution for the Parties to face. It compelled them explicitly to avow their practice and to disavow their profession. Their profession was to legislate in the interests of the working classes. Their practice was to legislate in the interest of the middle classes. Neither Party dare have voted to deprive the income tax payer of the relief promised him by the Budget. Both Parties preferred, without, of course, brutally saying so—to deprive the worn-out workman of his long-expected pension. That was the bottom fact of the situation. More obvious was the fact that the Unionists could not carry the resolution without upsetting their Government. The Liberals could not vote for it without pledging themselves beyond recall to enact Pensions as soon as they were in power. So prickly a resolution must be got out of the way. It was ruled out of order by the Speaker. His grounds were, I understand, that the initiative of expenditure can only come from the Government: it cannot come from a private Member. Certainly, in suppressing Mr. Crooks's motion the Speaker expressed, as it is his function to express, the preponderant feeling of the House. Certainly, too, as in preventing the Commons from thoroughly discussing, with the freedom of the Lords, the fiscal policy of the Government, the Speaker saved the Government from a very embarrassing dilemma.

"Out of order."

Mr. Crooks could not move his resolution. But he was neither daunted nor silenced. In the course of the debate on the Finance Bill on June 9th, he said:—

Will Crooks' advice.

"We are going to take the duty off corn, and to relieve the income tax payers to the extent of about ten millions. I do not know of any better use that can be made of the surplus we now have than by giving Old Age Pensions straight away. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer finds himself with a surplus, instead of getting up and suggesting

that now at last there is an opportunity of fulfilling the pledges which were given to the country, without any increase in the burden of taxation, and of meeting a large portion of the demand for Old Age Pensions, he starts another hare which we are to chase. That has happened over and over again. . . . I make this appeal to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Take this corn tax off, but keep the income tax on. In that way he will be able to meet a very large proportion of the demand of the working classes of this country for Old Age Pensions. I regret that the rules of the House will not permit me to move the amendment I proposed to move."

Beaten

The long battle of the Budget was over. We had been utterly defeated in Parliament. The autumn and winter which we had spent in untiring agitation for "Pensions in 1903" had failed of result. There was no lack of money available for the immediate inauguration of Pensions. The surplus was there. The case was made out. Outside the House the voice of Labour was unmistakable. The old folks were wearily waiting. All was in vain. We failed of our objective. Pensions in 1903 had not been obtained.

Why?**Selfishness of the well-to-do.****"Dumb dogs are they all."**

First, and as most culpable, must be ranked the selfishness of the middle and upper classes. Rather than forego the comparatively trifling relief of 4d. off the income tax they would leave the old folks in misery and ignominy. If the income tax had not been reduced, it would not have deprived those who paid it of a single meal. It would not have disfranchised them. It would at most have curtailed their comfort, or diminished their luxuries. But to three-quarters of a million of the aged poor it would have meant freedom from starvation, retention of civil rights, the salvation of self-respect. How many homes have been broken up, how many an aged toiler has been cast into the dungeon of the workhouse, how many an aged heart has broken, how many multitudes of hoary heads have gone down with sorrow to the grave, how many have slowly starved to death—for want of the pension which might have been theirs in 1903! They have been sacrificed at the sordid shrine of middle-class and upper-class comfort.

The representatives of these classes in Parliament are involved in the same condemnation. They might have risen to the great opportunity. They might have appealed to the nobler instincts of the comfortable and well-to-do. They might have roused the patriotism which would continue for the worn-out worker the sacrifices that had been made for the man in Khaki. But there was never a cheep or a mutter

or a murmur of suggestion from either Unionist or Liberal ranks that the surplus should go to the indigent aged rather than to the income tax payer. There was protestation enough of sympathy with impoverished age, but not the whisper of a penny piece for its relief out of all the ten million pounds to spare.

The responsibility deepens as we come to the Government, and to the man whom that Government and his followers regarded as above all others the champion of the aged poor. He was given his opportunity of realizing the ambition he had repeatedly and eloquently expressed, of lightening the lot and brightening the declining years of the veterans of industry. He made "the great refusal." No sentence of doom is so terrible as the simple statement of that fact.

But I should be wanting in my duty as a recorder of this movement if I sought to exempt from the general responsibility incurred by the House of Commons the then Labour Members. I make every allowance for the disheartening position in which they had for so long found themselves. But I must repeat here the profound regret which I expressed at the fourth annual meeting of the National Committee of Organized Labour, that the Labour Members had taken no opportunity of compelling the House to declare by debate or division whether the available surplus should go to increase the comfort of the comfortable classes, or be used to meet the just and long-neglected claims of superannuated Labour. In the debates on the Finance Bill, the House was asked to divide in the interest of the tea-drinker, in the interest of the corn-grower, but never once in the interest of two million aged citizens. Mr. Thomas Burt did indeed render great service by obtaining the promise of a Return as to the number and age of recipients of Poor Law relief. Mr. Fenwick pressed for immediate legislation on Old Age Pensions. But Mr. Will Crooks's was the only voice raised from the Labour Bench to demand that Pensions should precede remission of taxes. This was the demand of the working classes, frequently and cogently expressed; it had been endorsed by the most representative Labour leaders. It had been generally approved by Labour Members in the House. But all this mass of opinion only found vent in Parliament through the disallowed resolution and unreported speech of one Member, Will Crooks.

The obvious lessons of the battle on which we had staked so much, and in which we had been so completely worsted, were that for Pensions we must look to a new House of Commons, and still more to an increase of independent Labour Members of the type of Mr. Crooks.

"The great refusal."

General silence of the "Lib-Lab." M.P.'s.

The moral of defeat.

F.—FROM DEFEAT TO VICTORY

CHAPTER XXXIII HEARTS FAILING FOR FEAR

Reasons for Despair.

Our discomfiture in Parliament resulted, not unnaturally, in the serious discouragement of many of our friends. The situation presented also several other disheartening features. There was the public preoccupation with the controversies which raged around Education and Tariff Reform. More serious still was the huge expenditure which the War had left behind. A widespread feeling of the hopelessness of our quest found a typical expression as early as March, 1903, in a letter from one who was in principle entirely with us. Writing to a meeting we held at King's Lynn, Sir Brampton Gurdon, M.P., said:—

“ If ever Old Age Pensions are given, they must practically be universal, and not simply good conduct prizes. But I am afraid I must adhere to what I said at the General Election—that the enormous cost of the War would render any scheme of Old Age Pensions impossible during my lifetime. This has been confirmed by Mr. Long, the President of the Local Government Board. Any Member of Parliament who, for the sake of popularity, encourages his constituents to believe that in face of the present heavy taxation and large accumulation of debt, it will be possible for any Government to take up the question during the present generation, will be pursuing a very dishonest course, as he cannot but be aware that he is promising what he cannot perform.”

With this spirit abroad, we could not wonder when adherents fell back and subscribers withdrew their support. Trade Unions and Trades Councils are bound to look carefully for prospect of immediate result before they part with their hard-earned cash. Personal contributors began to ask themselves, Was it worth while maintaining an organisation

Not possible in this generation.

for the promotion of Pensions, when even its warmest well-wishers have no hope of legislation in this generation? As the winter advanced, the outlook for our National Committee grew financially very dark. The intended withdrawal of one who had from the first been a leading supporter of the movement led other prominent friends seriously to consider the question of continuing their support. And on the answer to that question hung the future of the Committee. They did me, however, the very great honour and kindness of making their action depend on my decision. They were good enough to refer to the part entrusted to me in the origination of the Committee, and to say that if I felt it ought to continue, they would still support it. If I thought otherwise, they would withdraw.

Should we give up?

Anyone who has read the opening chapters of this book will be in no doubt as to my answer. I could not have a moment's misgiving. I might despair of the present Parliament, but I was quite sure of the people. I was confident, too, that there was plenty of taxable wealth to supply, even under the South African burden, the pensions which justice demanded. Then, too, the Labour Representation Committee was selecting constituencies and candidates, with a fair prospect of securing the return of Labour Members attached to neither of the traditional Parties, and devoted to our end. But, as is obvious, my conviction was not based on any estimate of electoral or financial possibilities. It rested on the "signs that went before." The indications of the Will which had called our movement into being were to me absolutely unmistakable. The purpose so marvellously revealed and so unexpectedly confirmed would, in spite of war and war burdens, be carried through. Our duty was to go forward unhesitatingly.

That was my reply. The friends who consulted me were satisfied. They have never wavered nor faltered from that day to this in their loyal support of the cause, which they too felt had been committed to us.

Forward!

All this time Mr. Rogers had been pushing forward the agitation in town and country with all his might. To his other labours he added the burden of authorship. In the autumn of 1903 Messrs. Isbister began the "Pro and Con" series with a book on Old Age Pensions. Mr. Frederick Rogers contributed 120 pages "pro"; Mr. Frederick Millar, Secretary to the Liberty and Property Defence League, contributed 90 pages "con." The secretarial position of both writers suggests at once their respective standpoints. Both traced in outline the history of the Pensions movement.

"Pensions
Pro and Con."

Both cited Colonial and Continental experience. Both professed to draw their conclusions from admitted facts. But the conclusions were diametrically opposite. Mr. Rogers' study was couched in the spirit of the noblest idealism. His survey of the facts led up to an almost Miltonic appeal to his fellow-countrymen to rise above their traditional narrowness and accept the emancipation of great ideas. His Remedy was thus stated :—

**First charge
on Surplus
Wealth.**

“There is one way, and one only, by which there is a chance of successfully dealing with the problem of the aged poor. It is that the nation shall set aside annually, as a first charge upon its income from all sources, a given sum to be used as Pensions for its aged citizens who are past work. The accumulated wealth of a nation is the joint product of all its people, and not the product of any particular class. Any and every civilised nation produces more than its immediate needs require; produces, that is to say, a greater or less amount of surplus wealth.

“It is then equitable that those who cannot produce, whether from childhood and ignorance, or age and feebleness, shall have their support from the surplus wealth, should the need for it arise. We must face this principle, and institute in the place of our present system of Poor-relief a national system of State Pensions.”

Mr. Millar's general argument may be gathered from a single sentence :—

“To contend that persons who simply will not save and invest their savings for their own advantage should have their thriftlessness encouraged at the expense of the community is surely a proposal too unblushing in its effrontery to need further remark.”

**The dying
cause.**

It is only fair to let the dying groan of a discredited individualism be heard. Mr. Millar enumerates what he calls “economic and social objections” against State-aided Old Age Pensions. These are: the danger arising from multiplying the functions of the State; the enormous burden laid on the taxpayer; “they would cause a fall in wages”; they would “encourage wasteful expenditure” during the whole of the working life; they would be “a further application of the principle of communism”; the grave danger of pensioners possessing also a vote; the injury to thrift and industry and national character. Mr. Millar examines the working of the measure abroad, and claims to have shown “the baneful effects of these pensions wherever they have been adopted.” He submits that “in point of argument, fact and experience, the case against their adoption in this country is overwhelming.”

The juxtaposition of the two arguments "pro" and "con" in one volume was an admirable idea, and one most helpful to our cause. Mr. Rogers's case is strong enough by itself. It is immensely strengthened by the weakness of his opponent's.

Happily more formidable forces than a mere array of argument were gathering to our aid. Both of the historic Parties had, as we have seen, been tried in the balances of the Budget of 1903 and had been found wanting. Before another Budget appeared, fresh proof was given that Providence was raising up a new Party in the State to do what the old Parties had failed to do. In February, 1904, just when Parliament was reassembling, the Labour Representation Committee met in conference at St. George's Hall, Bradford, and definitely committed the nascent Labour Party to our principle. The resolution was moved by Mr. G. Cole, of the Plasterers' Union, and seconded—most appropriately—by Mr. Frederick Rogers, and was couched in the following terms :—

" Considering that the prosperity of the nation depends upon those who produce the wealth (the workers), it is but just that they in old age should receive pensions without any disability whatever, especially when we find that the Army, Naval, and Civil Services are pensioned after thirty years' service, this Conference instructs the Labour Party in the House of Commons to draft and bring in a Bill to pension all men and women after the age of sixty years, the funds to meet same to be raised from the same source as the £250,000,000 expended upon the late war in South Africa."

Old Age Pensions became henceforth the first plank of social reform in the platform of the Labour Party.

The new Party might be the instrument, but the agent must be the nation as a whole. Our appeal was directed, as heretofore, to the rank and file of all Parties and Schools.

In Parliament the Pensions movement could now hope to find only an educative and not a legislative agency. Again the King's Speech appeared (February 2nd, 1904) without any word of Pensions. And again we had difficulty in getting a Member to move an amendment. Good old Mr. Broadhurst, who had not, as it happened, joined our Committee, but was one of the very first of our legislators to advocate universal Pensions, came to our rescue, late on the opening night, and sent in notice of the following amendment :—

" And that this House, having regard to the deplorable condition of large numbers of your Majesty's aged subjects, humbly expresses its regret that your Majesty's Speech contains no promise of a measure to provide Pensions for the Aged."

A new weapon
being forged.

Mr.
Broadhurst's
amendment.

The introduction of two Pension Bills prevented, as before, this amendment from being discussed. The Budget, when it was divulged on April 19th, showed a prospective deficit of over three millions, to meet which an extra penny was put on the income tax and an extra twopence on tea. There was no foothold there for the claims of the aged. On May 6th, Mr. Goulding's Aged Pensioners' Bill was discussed. It was similar to Mr. Remnant's measure of the previous year, bestowing pensions by Poor Law Union Committees without disfranchising the recipient; the cost, now reckoned at eight millions, to be met half from the Imperial and half from the local treasury. There was not much hint of hope in the debate. Mr. Will Crooks, who deeply moved the House by his pathetic pictures of aged indigence, described these discussions as "pastime without result." Mr. Long "laid stress on the immense practical difficulties in the way of all Old Age Pension schemes," and then referred to the humanizing of the workhouse and the frequency of outdoor relief. Comfort for paupers apparently was to salve the conscience of a Parliament that had refused cash for pensioners.

Perhaps the most important speech of the evening was made by Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who, having been Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1895 to 1902, was in a position to speak with authority on what may be described as the financial intelligence and the financial purpose of the Unionist Government. According to the official report, he said:—

"He thought this House ought to be honest. Did any of them believe it was possible for an Old Age Pension scheme to become law? There was much that would dispose many of them to vote in favour of Old Age Pensions on the ground of sentiment: but the more the subject had been examined, the more impossible, to his mind, it had become to carry out any scheme consistently with any possible charge that could be put on the ratepayers or the taxpayers. If that were so, he thought they owed it to the people of this country that they should have the courage of their convictions. If they believed the scheme impossible, they ought to vote against the Second Reading of the Bill."

This deliverance from the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer proved conclusively how hollow and unreal had been the talk of his colleagues in 1898 and 1899 about early Pensions legislation. It will be remembered that this same Sir Michael Hicks Beach was in charge of the national finances at a time when Mr. Chamberlain (April 25th, 1899) declared,

"Pastime without Result."

Hypocrisy unmasked.

“ What we have said again and again, and what we are prepared to say now, is that we hope and intend to deal with this matter before we leave office.” It should also be remembered that it was with the hopes of more than a million of the aged trembling on the borders of starvation or destitution that these right honourable gentlemen were amusing themselves.

In spite of Sir Michael Hicks Beach’s protest, Mr. Goulden’s Bill was read a second time, and committed.

On the same day as these exposures of the good faith of British statesmen had taken place, the return ordered at Mr. Burt’s request was issued. The conclusory summary may be given here :—

	1st August, 1890.	1st January, 1892.	1st July, 1899.	1st January, 1900.	1st Sept., 1903.
(1) Paupers 16 years of age and upwards .....	...	471,568	469,980	494,600	490,513
(2) Paupers 65 years of age and upwards	245,687	268,307	278,718	286,929	284,265
(3) Ratio per cent. of paupers 65 years of age and upwards (figures in 2) to total number of paupers 16 years of age and upwards (figures in 1) ...	...	56.9	59.3	58.0	58.0
(4) Ratio per cent. of total number of paupers 65 years of age and upwards to total number of persons of the same age	18.0	19.4	18.7	19.2	18.3
(5) Ratio per cent. of indoor paupers 65 years of age and upwards to total paupers 65 years of age and upwards	22.3	23.6	23.9	26.0	26.5

On this Mr. Rogers observed :—

“ In comparing the figures in the different columns of the above table, allowance must be made for the fact that the number of paupers is always higher in January than in July, August, or September, and also for the fact that the returns for August 1st, 1890, and September 1st, 1903, excluded, whereas the returns did not exclude persons who were only in receipt of relief constructively by reason of relief being given to wives and children. After making such allowances,

it appears that the proportion of paupers over 65 years of age in the total number of adult paupers has not varied much, though it *has risen* since January 1st, 1892, and that the proportion of paupers over 65 years of age to the estimated number of persons in England and Wales over that age on the respective dates has remained almost the same. The total number of paupers over 65 years of age has on each date formed more than half the total number of paupers over 16 years of age. The table shows that a larger proportion of the total number of aged paupers has been relieved by admission to workhouses and infirmaries on each succeeding dates."

The agitation was advancing in Parliament a little, in the Press more, most of all in the country. Our demands were embodied in resolutions carried unanimously in Labour gatherings. Mr. Rogers addressed 4,000 men on the subject at the Church Congress. He also expounded our scheme before an International Congress held in Edinburgh in June, and his speeches were translated into several languages. The seed thus sown oversea has in later years borne unexpected fruit. But alas! the funds supplied to the National Committee did not by any means keep pace with its needs. Mr. Rogers thus describes the steps which were taken in consequence:—

"In the month of March I found it necessary to bring our financial position before the Executive. One of our most generous subscribers had found it impossible to continue his subscription during the present year, and our funds were low. Politics were in confusion and there seemed little hope of any immediate practical work, and with the full consent of the chairman, vice-chairman, and sub-committee, I agreed to continue my office without salary for twelve months, and also to work for twelve months with Messrs. Rowntree and Sherwell on their scheme of Constructive Temperance Reform, using what funds we had for necessary work, such as printing, postage, etc. In doing this I have had the gratuitous and valuable help of Mr. Cecil Catford, a resident of Browning Hall, who has looked after things when I have been absent from London, I meanwhile continuing the public work of the movement as heretofore. The work has been longer than we thought for at first, but we have had loyal supporters and faithful friends, and if we all resolve to keep it steadily in the forefront of politics, it is the one piece of constructive legislation before the country to-day, and we shall yet see the reward of our labours.

"But it will be reached only by continued effort, and for this we look to the Labour Members more than to any other section of politicians."

**Stinting our
Secretary.**

Then Mr. Rogers found it necessary to speak a word in *A word to Labour M.P.'s* season to stir up the somewhat otiose tendencies of the Labour group in Parliament :—

“ We have always realized the loyalty of the Labour men to our cause, and owe more than we can ever repay to Mr. Crooks, M.P., and Mr. Burt, M.P., for what they have done. But there must be a greater response inside the House to the agitation outside ; there must be more skirmishing now if there is to be a fight to a finish in the future, and every representative of Labour ought to realize that this cause can only be won by persistent fighting, and not by merely waiting on whatever Providence there may be in politics for a chance. I know they believe in this cause, and for the sake of themselves, and those of their order who in their age and feebleness fall beneath the wheels of our social Juggernaut, they ought to fight for it better in the future than they have in the past. ”

CHAPTER XXXIV

A MEMORABLE BYE-ELECTION

The Parliament of 1900 had more reason than the Merry Monarch to apologise for being such an unconscionable time in dying. After the end of the war, its demise was felt to be decently due. And the longer it protracted its moribund existence, the more eagerly did the nation look forward to the inevitable end. As a Committee we were resolved that so far as we could influence public opinion, the old policy of shuffle and make-believe about Pensions should be tolerated no longer. Accordingly, Mr. Rogers drew up and printed on August 31st, 1904, the following leaflet :—

PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES AND OLD AGE PENSIONS.

“A General Election may at any moment be upon us, and it will be necessary for all friends of Old Age Pensions to be ready with questions for candidates. The National Committee, therefore, have issued the following suggestions as to the ‘ heckling ’ of candidates. It will be found that on this subject candidates may be divided into three categories : (1) People who have thought the subject out, and have come to the conclusion that Old Age Pensions are an equitable and necessary reform; (2) honest opponents; (3) wobblers, who are not sure where they are, and who occasionally show considerable talent in evading a straight answer to a straight question. The first category are safe, whatever Party they may belong to. An honest opponent is worth the trouble of conversion, and may sometimes be converted; it is the wobbler who is the danger. In questioning a creature of this type on Old Age Pensions there are certain stereotyped replies, largely supplied by the election agent, with which the ‘ heckler ’ must in no way be satisfied. Here is a sample of the kind of dialogue that often takes place between questioner and candidate :—

**Short shrift
for the
shuffler.**

Q.—“Are you in favour of pensions for the aged in place of Poor Law Relief?”

A.—“ I am willing to support any well-considered scheme of pensions ”; or

“ I am in favour of pensions provided they do not hinder the work of the Friendly Societies ”; or

“ I am in favour of pensions for thrifty and deserving persons ”; or

“ I am in favour of some scheme of Old Age Pensions, but have not yet seen one that satisfied me.”

“ The first answer is an evasion, and the candidates should be informed of the fact, and told that there is a well-considered scheme—that of the National Committee of Organized Labour—is he in favour of that?

“ The second answer is an evasion also ; but the candidates should be told that in Manchester, in March, 1902, the National Conference of Friendly Societies voted in favour of the State providing pensions for all persons over the age of 65 who are unable to work, and in need of the same, and that five Trade Union Congresses and two Co-operative Congresses have given a vote for Old Age Pensions.

“ To the third the reply can be made that you cannot define the words ‘ thrifty ’ and ‘ deserving ’ satisfactorily, and that all alike would have to pay for the pensions, and that, therefore, all would have an equal claim.

“ To the last the answer should be that no politician ought to be without an opinion on a subject like this ; that ample literature exists on the subject ; and that the National Committee of Organized Labour, whose offices are at Browning Hall, Walworth, will supply him with all information.

“ Remember that the only logical and equitable system is the universal system, that all must pay to the Pension Fund, therefore all can claim if they desire. That the Friendly Societies themselves have given up the idea of endowment or special treatment, that such an idea is unjust because it would endow the well-paid artisan at the expense of the ill-paid, that every form of organized Labour has declared itself in favour of Old Age Pensions, that there is a steady increase in our national wealth year by year, and that Old Age Pensions can be created, and ought to be.”

Electors armed with this leaflet were likely to make the path of the waverer and the tergiversator a thorny one.

By way of preliminary skirmish, the regular course of our agitation was varied every now and then by the occurrence of a contested bye-election. The candidates on both sides were usually approached, and according to the answers they

gave the National Committee either declared both candidates satisfactory, or pronounced in favour of the more satisfactory of the two. This action was taken entirely independent of Party.

In the Isle of Thanet (October, 1904), my old college friend, Mr. Joseph King, was fighting in the Liberal interest against Mr. Marks, a Unionist, whose commercial record excited grave misgivings in the breasts of many loyal Unionists. We questioned both candidates, and issued a manifesto which closed : "From Mr. Marks we have received no satisfactory assurance. Mr. King has pronounced himself in favour of Old Age Pensions as a civil right. It is therefore our duty to recommend that you vote for King."

Unfortunately the tactics of Mr. Marks triumphed at the polls.

**Horsham,
1904.**

During the same month a vacancy occurred at Horsham, in Sussex. I happened to rent a small cottage in that charming rural resort, as a summer retreat from the stifling heat of Walworth streets. I was therefore an elector. As soon as the vacancy was announced, I cycled down to Horsham through a country all aglow with autumn colour. I meant to hunt up the candidates. I arrived before the Unionist candidate was so much as chosen. I went therefore to the Liberal Committee Rooms. I was assured that Mr. Lestocq Erskine, the Liberal candidate, was "strong on Pensions," and had a paragraph dealing with the subject in his address. That address was in type, but had not yet been published. I was offered a sight of it in proof. I replied that as I was not of the Party and wished to hold myself free from any Party entanglements, I would see nothing that was not open to the public. I obtained the private address of Mr. Erskine, and cycled out to his place, which was some miles away. It was a delightful autumn morning. I found a trap standing before the door, and the candidate himself in the hall ready to mount the vehicle. I soon acquainted him with the purpose of my call. He assured me that he was a determined advocate of Old Age Pensions; he had always made a strong point of it in his speeches. He found it was a most popular subject with the electors. I invited him to pledge himself to vote for Universal Pensions, and for Pensions before reduction of taxation. I produced the familiar postcard with the printed form of the two-fold pledge, and asked him to sign there and then. He did so.

**Captured in
the nick of
time.**

He then said he was just riding down to town to meet a gentleman from the Liberal Central Association.

I was glad I had seen him first!

Mr. Erskine courteously invited me to accompany him. I declined, as I had a friend waiting for me outside. The candidate mounted the trap and drove off to meet the gentleman from the Liberal Central Association. What followed after that meeting was significant. The Liberal address appeared, but with no mention of Pensions. The paragraph of which I had been assured had evidently been erased. The Liberal candidate began making speeches. I saw reports of them. There was not a word in them about Pensions. It required no Sherlock Holmes to see that official Liberalism had discountenanced any reference to Pensions.

I next endeavoured to get hold of the Unionist candidate, Lord Turnour. But in vain. His address appeared, also without a line about Pensions. Both Parties clearly meant to shelve the question. The bitter need of more than a million old folks was apparently to be ignored for Party convenience.

This was not to be tolerated.

Happily there were forces of God permanently mobilized in Horsham who were not under control of the Party drill sergeant. There were the Churches. So I drafted the following entirely non-Party manifesto. I cycled to the new Vicar of Horsham. He was just moving into the Vicarage. The furniture was being carried into the rooms. Standing at the door he perused the document, pondered several minutes, and then signed. I next secured the signature of the Roman Catholic priest, who read and signed in silence. With the prompt and energetic aid of Mr. Stanley Alfred Talbot, son of the pastor of the Horsham Congregational Church, other signatures were obtained. Finally the manifesto appeared as follows:—

ON BEHALF OF THE AGED POOR.

To the Candidates in the forthcoming Election of a Member of Parliament for the Horsham Division.

GENTLEMEN,—We, the undersigned Ministers of Religion in the Parliamentary Division of Horsham, desire to approach you, irrespective of the Party to which you may belong, on behalf of a large, and needy, and sadly neglected class of His Majesty's subjects. We urge on you the claims of the AGED POOR.

According to the estimate of Lord Rothschild's Committee, two-thirds of the population over 65 years of age are unprovided for except by the degrading and disfranchising

"Mum's the word,"—

**—in both
Parties.**

**The Church of
God not
muzzled.**

action of the Poor Law. That two-thirds of the aged dwelling in this Christian land should be left with no other prospect for their declining years than pauperism, or dependence on often over-burdened relatives, or starvation, is to our minds a foul blot upon our national escutcheon; it is a crime against humanity: it is a sin against God.

Time and again the House of Commons has passed without a division the second reading of one or other Bill to provide pensions for the aged. We observe a general readiness on the part of candidates to express a willingness to vote for some measure of Old Age Pensions.

We desire to press upon you our urgent hope that you will not content yourselves with academic expressions of benevolent interest in the condition of the aged, or with vague promises to vote, if returned to Parliament, for undefined measures designed to mitigate their lot, but that you will use your best influence and power, during this contest, and, if returned, in the House of Commons, to force this question of Pensions to the front of legislative attention, and that you will yourselves make a straightforward and definite pronouncement of the way in which you propose to deal with it.

We are aware of the vast number of questions—Imperial, Fiscal and Educational—which will demand your consideration with all the clamancy attaching to fiercely controversial partisan politics. With the more earnestness do we commend to your conscience the needs of those who have few votes, little influence, and no partisan passion behind them. Precisely because their claims are likely to be crowded out or shouted down, do we make this appeal to you in the name of our Most Sacred Religion and of the Reverence for Age which its most solemn precepts enjoin.

J. ARTHUR ALDINGTON, Wesleyan Minister.

E. T. ARKLE, Shipley Vicarage.

JOHN BOND, Vicar of Horsham.

RICHARD BOWCOTT, Warnham Vicarage.

R. C. BULL, Stedham Rectory.

GEORGE T. CARR, Amberley Vicarage.

C. HERBERT CLAPP, Baptist Church, Horsham.

J. KING CUMMIN, Vicar of Easebourne.

B. J. DEWRY, Rudgwick Vicarage.

THOMAS D. DODSWORTH, Primitive Methodist Minister.

EDWARD O. EDGEELL, Lodsworth Vicarage.

E. L. ELWES, Rector of Woolbeding and Archdeacon of Chichester.

E. L. GARVOCK HOUNDLE, Rector of Heyshott.
 F. G. HUGHES, Slinfold Rectory.
 R. ALEX. JOHNSON, Congregational Minister, Petworth.
 GEO. LANSDOWNE, Unitarian Minister, Billingshurst.
 T. E. DE V. LAURENCE, Curate-in-Charge of Holy Trinity
 Church, Horsham.
 J. J. MARTEN, Unitarian Minister.
 S. MCARTHUR, Partridge Green.
 JAMES McAUSLANE, Baptist Minister, Crawley.
 JOHN MOSES, Rector of Etchinfield.
 H. COBLEY MOYLE, Iping Rectory.
 C. T. PLANK (Congregational), Midhurst.
 J. P. PODMORE, The Vicarage, Cowfold.
 A. J. ROBERTS, Vicar of Harting.
 G. E. ROGERS, Southwater Vicarage.
 JOHN STANLEY, The Vicarage, Billingshurst.
 WALTER C. TALBOT, Minister of Horsham Congrega-
 tional Church.
 J. E. WALLACE, Roman Catholic Priest.
 HERBERT E. WARD, Dial Post, West Grinstead.
 ARTHUR F. YOUNG, Curate-in-Charge of St. Mark's,
 Horsham.
 F. HERBERT STEAD.

As will be seen, the appeal was signed by thirty-two ministers of religion, including about a score of Anglicans; the Roman Catholic priest; Baptist, Congregational, Wesleyan, Primitive, and Unitarian ministers.

The Parties
 out-generalled.

This manifesto saved the situation for the old folks. Both candidates were compelled to make reply, and to reply at length. Their replies were printed and sent to every dignitary. The matter occupied many columns of the local Press. The London newspapers gave great prominence to the position which Pensions had taken in the election. The Churches had out-generalled the Parties.

The replies of the candidates were comparatively unimportant. Lord Turnour replied that on his estate all who had been in the family service for a certain number of years, when incapacitated through old age or illness, were allowed a pension of not less than 5s. a week and a cottage rent free. He would consent to a scheme by which persons of either sex would contribute during their working years a small sum yearly to the State, which, put out at compound interest, would be returned to them in weekly allowances in old age; together with State aid to anyone who were unable,

through illness or misfortune, to provide for themselves. Mr. Erskine had, of course, already declared himself.

Tactics that failed.

But the tactics of the Liberals were manifestly directed towards fighting the election chiefly on the issue between Tariff Reform and Free Trade. Evidently this did not rouse the enthusiasm of the agricultural labourers as it might have been aroused by giving prominence to the promise of pensions for all in their old age. The Liberals did not succeed in capturing the seat.

The official Liberal policy of reticence on Pensions had not merely been defeated by the intervention of the Churches; it had been punished at the polls. Politicians were taught that the claims of the aged could no longer be trifled with.

CHAPTER XXXV

ON THE EVE OF THE NATIONAL VOTE

1905 was one long preparation for the electoral struggle which was to decide our question. The official policy of the two chief Parties in the State was, as we have seen, to maintain complete silence concerning Pensions; or, when speech was extorted, to say nothing definite. The movement advanced in both Parties, but entirely without official leadership. We took every opportunity of permeating with our ideas the rank and file that marched under the Liberal and the Unionist banners. Opportunity, when not offered, we created.

"In season out of season."

Mr. Rogers availed himself of the courtesy of the *Conservative Club Gazette* to issue in the May number of that journal, which circulates widely among Conservative bodies, "an appeal to the Conservative Party," putting the case for immediate Pensions legislation in a way that was in line with Conservative history and that would appeal to the Conservative conscience. He made every use acceded to him by the Liberal Press to stir up Liberal consciences.

"All things to all men."

The growing Labour Party became ever more and more pronounced in the resolve to push Pensions to the front.

Early in the year Mr. Rogers's engagement in the service of Constructive Temperance Reform came to an end, and was not renewed. The whole of his time was needed for the Pensions campaign; and he gave it as before.

True to the tradition of our movement, which had found in Trades Councils a most important engine of progressive propaganda, Mr. Rogers issued to the Trades Councils of the United Kingdom the following circular:—

Appeal to the Trades Councils.

"FELLOW TRADE UNIONISTS,—The latest official utterances upon the General Election seem to indicate that this event will not—unless the unforeseen happens—take place until some time in the year 1906. If this be so, there is a period of, let us say, twelve months, in which to put pressure upon our Government to bring forward a Bill for Old Age Pensions, a measure of reform to which they are pledged up to the hilt,

and bound by every principle of political honesty. Do not be misled by the false parrot cry, invented by the enemies of this reform—‘They can’t afford it; they’ve got no money; it won’t come in our time.’ The returns of His Majesty’s Commissioners of Inland Revenue show a steady increase in the income of the nation; and what happens in our time depends entirely on the people of our time. They can have Old Age Pensions now if they are determined to have them.

“The National Committee of Organized Labour for the promotion of Old Age Pensions for all, ask each Trade Unionist before whom this letter comes, to assist them in their agitation on behalf of Pensions by writing to the Member of Parliament for his constituency, and urging him, in the strongest terms, to force this question to the front in the House of Commons. If the member be a Liberal, he must be reminded that some among the leaders of that Party, and many among the rank and file, are earnest believers in the principle of Pensions for the Aged. If he be a Conservative, he must be told that his Party is more deeply pledged than any other Party in the State to the same principle, and will stand eternally disgraced before the nation if they do not carry their pledges out. If he be a Labour Member, he should be told that as this is pre-eminently a Labour question he should lose no opportunity by measure or by resolution to keep the subject before the nation. And all Parties alike must be told that this reform is based upon the dictates of humanity, and stands, therefore, above the considerations of Party.

“For the sake of the aged, who because they are old can bring little political capital to any Party, we appeal to the young, to the middle-aged, and to all who desire to see some of the burden of poverty taken off our citizens in their declining years, that they will by the simple and constitutional methods that lie nearest their hands, force our Government to carry out their ancient pledge to make better the condition of our Aged Poor.—FREDERICK ROGERS, Secretary of the National Committee of Organised Labour.”

The expectant
Aged.

Public meetings were not at first so numerous as before. But there was an abundance of other signs that the public mind was made up. A pathetic indication of the quickened expectancy that prevailed was supplied by letters which came pouring in from aged correspondents in parts of the land most widely removed. The aged sempstress, who had worked all her life but whose eyesight was now failing her, wrote to ask what she was to do till Old Age Pensions came. From three such letters Mr. Rogers has quoted the following

excerpts. Here is the life-story of an agricultural labourer : **A farm labourer.**

“ I began life by working for a farmer in this neighbourhood at a penny a day, and work has been my lot ever since. I do not complain of it ; indeed, I have had my happiest times when so engaged. I never got more than 2s. 6d. a day : most of my time I worked at from 1s. 6d. a day. I was married in 1863. I have had, and reared without parish relief, four children. They are all grown up and they are good members of society. My wife is beside me in our happy little home to this day. We live here, where we have lived for 25 years. The rent I pay is £6 a year, and all is straight up to this day. Now, after all these years we feel the pressure of old age coming down upon us, and we fear what may be ours soon to know : how soon we know not. It seems so hard to have parish pay hanging over you. I have always paid my way, and have even done the best I could to help my poorer neighbours in their trials, and thus have tried to do my best for my country and for all. I have the same feeling and desire now but my strength fails me, and I am conscious that the weakness of old age is upon me.

“ Will you pardon me for thus writing to you ? Believe me that I am not seeking my own good alone. I plead for thousands of my fellow men and women as well as ourselves. I feel that simple justice calls mightily for Old Age Pensions for the people of England.”

“ I am a poor widow of 68 years old, and have reared four children, and am here alone. The guardians will not allow me relief, and tell me I am able to work. It is very hard and I fear I shall be driven to the workhouse. I have heard of one of your tracts on Old Age Pensions, and I do pray that you will do all you can to get us this. I have worked ever since I was eight years old and I cannot keep on much longer. I do not like to ask my children to keep me, they are too poor ; I do not like to beg, and steal I will not. And so I pray you to get the Pensions Act through Parliament as soon as you can.” **A working widow.**

“ I am 69 years old, and have reared seven children, and am living alone. At present I am depending on my children, and they are all married and have large families, and it pains me very much to rely on them for support as they are all poor, and I am receiving what ought to go to bring up their children ; but they won’t hear of me asking relief from the guardians, as they think they will force me to go into the workhouse. I pray that you may be able to help us.” **Seven proofs of “thrift.”**

And so on. And so on. Who were we that we should be appealed to as gods with power to give or withhold what

was the plain right of these aged sufferers? Their cries only spurred us on to leave no avenue of influence untried to wrest the needed help from the hands that could grant it.

Appeal to the King.

The paralysis which had fallen on the Government in consequence of the fiscal controversy and from other causes, turned many eyes in the direction of the Royal initiative which, when Parties fail, remains the resort of a disappointed people. Mr. Rogers did a very bold thing. He appealed right past Ministers to the King. The letter which follows appeared in the *Morning Post*, was afterwards submitted to His Majesty, and was duly acknowledged by the Secretary of State. It is of value as a monument of the way in which earnest men were beginning to despair of politicians. Mr. Rogers is by nature and conviction incapable of Court sycophancy; yet this is what he felt impelled to write in the fifth year of the twentieth century:—

“SIR,—Will you permit me through your columns to draw the attention of politicians and the public to the condition of our aged poor, and to remind the former of their numberless promises to reform that condition by enacting that pensions for the aged shall be substituted for poor relief? I am well aware that to go into the political arena and to ask that those who govern us shall find time to address themselves to a simple act of justice is to be very much like the voice of one crying in the wilderness. I know that aged men and women who are tottering along the paths of poverty to the friendly embraces of the grave can bring no political capital to any Party, and that the only grounds on which an appeal to make easier their few declining days can rest are those of justice and humanity. And, knowing these things, I still urge, with all the strenuousness in my power, the claims of the poverty-stricken aged. The old facts remain facts still. The last return of ‘persons in receipt of relief’ moved for by Mr. Burt, M.P., and ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on the 28th of March, 1904, shows no improvement of the condition of things revealed by a similar report made ten years before, but, on the contrary, shows a slight change for the worse. It has not ceased to be a fact that, of the men and women of our nation over 65 years of age, nearly two-thirds are in want, and we know the way to remedy the evils we deplore.

“All political Parties alike have, in a greater or lesser degree, placed themselves on the side of Old Age Pensions, and the House of Commons has twice affirmed the principle without a dissentient vote. The Conservative Party is pledged up to the hilt to this reform and has always shown

itself sympathetic thereto, the majority of Liberals are in agreement with it, and the Labour Members regard it as an essential plank in their platform. We know what public opinion is on the subject: it has been expressed in every possible way. All the old bogies and stumbling-blocks are cleared out of our path. Nobody even professes to believe now that a pension of 5s. a week at 65 will destroy any of the thrift instincts in young people of 21. The idea of endowing the Friendly Societies is as dead as Queen Anne. The last two reports of His Majesty's Commissioners of Inland Revenue show no decrease in the national wealth, and the possibility of Old Age Pensions is as entirely proved as is the justice of them.

"And the great political machine goes grinding on, and the result is 'Words, words, words.' 'We mark time in this place, nothing more,' said a Member in the House of Commons to me the other day, and he spoke true. If, then, the Great Assembly fails us—and it is failing us for all practical purposes—where shall we look for the voice which shall authoritatively declare the convictions of the nation? In that power which before any other typifies the continuity of our national life, and which stands above the petty strifes of partizan politics—in the Monarchy itself. It is the glory of the English Monarchy that it is the living embodiment of those great constitutional principles which the nation holds supreme. More than once during the last half-century, acting strictly in accordance with constitutional precedent and constitutional principles, it has been a peacemaker amid the factions of politics, a power that has evolved order from the chaos of political strife. The popularity of King Edward VII. with every class of his subjects is the most assured fact in English public life. The effort to make easier the closing years of His Majesty's aged subjects is unlimited, and ever has been with political Parties; it is simply an effort for social justice, upon which the majority have agreed. Mr. George Barnes, Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, said recently: 'Old Age Pensions were discussed in the reign of Edward VI.; I hope we may see the discussion come to fruition in the reign of our justly popular King Edward VII.' Most heartily do I echo his words. From the failures and broken promises of political partizans we turn to that other power which, because it is based upon ancient and inviolable principles which find their life in the life of the nation, can exercise an influence as constitutional as it is far-reaching, abiding and real.—Yours, etc., FREDERICK ROGERS, Secretary of the National Committee of Organized Labour."

At the Annual Meeting of our Committee on July 29th, there were reported certain "sympathetic utterances of Mr. Redmond to Mr. Crooks," which elicited from us a resolution urging "that an endeavour be made to secure a working alliance with the Irish Party for the purposes of Old Age Pensions."

Primate's Pronouncement.

Mindful of the impetus which our movement had received in its early days from the emphatic pronouncement of Archbishop Temple, Mr. Rogers obtained a private audience of his successor, and later was honoured with the following letter:—

" Lambeth Palace, August 1st.

" DEAR MR. ROGERS,—I thank you for your last letter. I have not, since I had the pleasure of seeing you, had a great deal of time at my disposal for considering the papers which you left with me. I have now, however, looked into them with some care, and I bear in mind all that you have said. Nor, indeed, was the subject a new one to me. I read a great deal in connection with the matter when it was a subject of active controversy a few years ago.

" I quite understand, however, that your object in coming to me was to urge that I should set forward your appeal on broad and general lines, especially from a Christian standpoint. This would obviously be apart from mere questions of politics, or even statesmanship, in the technical sense. No competent observer can, I think, be satisfied that we have yet solved aright the problem of how to deal with the aged poor. I deeply regret the fact that the Royal Commission appointed a few years ago to deal with the subject of Old Age Pensions did not include in its number any minister of religion, for such men, as has been abundantly shown, have almost unique opportunities of observation and knowledge, and many of them use such opportunities to the full.

" I wish God-speed with all my heart to every man who is grappling with that difficult and perplexing task. I join heartily in the appeal which is made in so many quarters in favour of the courageous endeavour to reconsider such questions from the foundation in the right of Christian principle and Christian sympathy.

" To that extent I am entirely with you; but general appeals ought, if they are to be effective, to be accompanied by detailed recommendations, and such recommendations must emanate from those who are experts not only in economic study but in administrative experience in national affairs.

"When the time comes that we have before us a definite scheme or even rival schemes promulgated under such auspices as I have described, you will not, I am certain, find that the bishops and clergy of the National Church are lacking in an eager desire to set forward such wise and practical action as may remedy the conditions in the life of some of our aged poor, which are deplorable in themselves, and which ought to be impossible in any country which had really learned aright how to apply in common life the principles laid down by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—I am, Yours very truly, RANDALL CANTUAR."

This promise, as we shall see, was not fulfilled until the Old Age Pensions Bill came before the House of Lords in 1908.

The nearest Nonconformist counterpart to the Anglican Primate is the President of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. That office was held in 1908 by my friend Dr. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead. At my request he issued to all Free Church candidates for Parliament an appeal practically identical with the manifesto which thirty-two ministers of religion had signed in the Horsham bye-election. To it, as to the Primate's letter, the widest publicity was given: and the Press duly rubbed home the advice of both religious leaders. When the Hampstead bye-election took place in October, the views which had been expressed on Pensions by Cardinal Vaughan, Archbishops Temple and Davidson, and Dr. Horton were printed in leaflet form and circulated amongst the electors.

The imminence of a General Election roused our local committees to renewed activity. The Birmingham Committee was re-constituted in November, with Mr. Dalley as secretary—the very embodiment of resolute and persistent purpose. It promptly proceeded to heckle local candidates and to prepare a manifesto.

Nor were the Friendly Societies left out from the general rally for Pensions. The overtures of Mr. Chamberlain had led, it will be remembered, to a variety of schemes being put forward in several of the societies. But in the end they all came to nothing. Now Mr. Rogers issued a circular letter to all the Friendly Societies of the United Kingdom, asking them to lay the following resolution before their members, and, if it was carried, to send it to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer:—

"This society desires to enter its strongest protest at the delay of the Government in dealing with the question of Old Age Pensions. All parties in the State are agreed as to the

Appeal from
the Free
Church
President.

Rallying the
Friendly
Societies.

necessity of a better treatment of the aged than is given them under the Poor Law, and this society regrets profoundly that the promises given by politicians, and the pledges made to the nation by the Government, still remain unfulfilled."

Mr. Rogers was able to report that it was carried by the majority of Friendly Societies without a dissentient vote.

Mr. Chamberlain's farewell. The Trades and Labour Council of Coventry approached through its secretary the one-time famous champion of Pensions. Mr. Chamberlain's reply may be taken as his farewell utterance on the subject :—

" Dear Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of October 20th. I have already publicly stated that I do not propose to make the question of Old Age Pensions a part of the programme of Tariff Reform.

" The latter will secure, among other things, additional revenue; but I have said that the disposal of this revenue must be left for later consideration, when the working classes, who, of course, constitute the majority of the electors, will be able to make their wishes known as to the use to which it shall be put. In answer to your second question, I have also stated publicly on many occasions that I do not believe universal Old Age Pensions to be either practicable or desirable.

" To treat the thriftless, the drunkard, and the wastrel the same as the industrious and provident working man seems to me to be a great injustice to the latter.—Trusting that your Council will agree with me, I am, Yours faithfully, J. CHAMBERLAIN.

" Mr. Hugh B. Farren, Trades and Labour Council, Coventry."

Mr. Rogers promptly availed himself of the opportunity thus given him by making reply in the *Daily News* and the *Morning Post*. In both he rejoiced that by disconnecting Pensions from Tariff Reform Mr. Chamberlain had freed the question from entanglement with Party politics. In both he pointed out that the indiscriminate treatment of good and bad alike of which Mr. Chamberlain complained was precisely the fault of the present Poor Law, " and " (in the *Daily News*) " it would be better economy, as assuredly it would be truer Christianity, to run the risk of pensioning a few drones rather than let the working bees die of hunger. We pension a great crowd of aristocratic drones as it is, and no one, not even Mr. Chamberlain, has any word of protest for that." In the *Morning Post* Mr. Rogers very neatly said : " The point is that he has affirmed, whether intentionally or not, that Old Age Pensions is a reform of too great importance to be

connected with matters which as yet must be regarded as in the domain of speculative rather than practical politics."

This final abdication by Mr. Chamberlain of all part or ^{Unionist} lot in the Pensions movement marked the passing of the last chance of the Unionist Party being the first to legislate on the subject. A month after the letter was published, Mr. Balfour placed his resignation in the hands of the King, and on December 5th Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE GENERAL ELECTION, 1906

Our manifesto was all ready before the change of Government took place. It was in the newspapers four days after Mr. Balfour's resignation was announced. It was one of the very first manifestoes to appear. It ran as follows:—

JUSTICE TO THE AGED. TO THE ELECTORS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

“ At length the time has come. The claims of old age can now be met. All parties in the State are agreed on the need and justice of Pensions for the aged. The war in South Africa blocked the way; but that is over, and the field is clear. The House of Commons has unanimously and repeatedly declared for Old Age Pensions. So have all the great assemblies of organized Labour. The nation, as a whole, is of one mind in the matter. ”

“ The facts are well known. Government statistics show that more than a million aged persons over the age of 65 are unprovided for. The machinery of the Poor Law has broken down. Personal thrift is, in most cases, unequal to the task. Charity is always precarious, often demoralizing, wholly inadequate.

“ Do not be misled by the parrot-cry that we cannot afford Pensions. We can.

“ Every Party in the State has its scheme for providing new and ample sources of revenue. The wealth of the nation steadily increases, and we can always afford to be just.

“ Electors, do your duty to your aged fellow citizens. Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Vote on behalf of those who through the indigence of age have lost their votes. See to it that they do not suffer because they lack the advertisement of controverted politics. Give your suffrages only to the man who is pledged to vote for a measure giving Pensions to all the aged. Champion the

cause of those who, because they are old and poor, can bring no political capital to any Party. For the worn-out worker, man or woman, who has helped to build the fabric of our national life, demand not charity, but justice."

A special meeting of our Executive Committee was held on December 14th, just seven years and a day after Mr. Charles Booth's first Conference, and in the same building. The final touches were put on our arrangements for the decisive battle. One personal vote it is a pleasure to record : — "That this meeting tenders its hearty congratulations to its honoured colleague and fellow-committeeman, Right Hon. John Burns, M.P., on his appointment as President of the Local Government Board, wishes him all prosperity in the new phase of his public career, and expresses its confidence that amid his numerous duties he will remain in the future, as in the past, the loyal champion of the aged poor."

The manifesto was issued as a leaflet, with our Bill printed on the back. One hundred thousand copies were distributed through all our centres, and by every other avenue that sought or accepted supply. The combined circulation of all the newspapers which published it would be an interesting sum in journalistic arithmetic. There were besides, 50,000 copies of our other leaflets judiciously distributed among the electorate. The Midland Committee and the West of Scotland Committee each published a separate manifesto of their own, flavoured to suit local palates, and secured for both a wide dissemination through the Press. By being almost the first in the field, our appeals obtained much more complete and prominent insertion in the newspapers than was procurable by later manifestoes.

Candidates of all parties were freely bombarded by Mr. Rogers through the post; and here again our early attack won us answers which would have been impossible when the fight was thickening. To the two hundred Free Church candidates Mr. Rogers sent his inquiries, with copies of Dr. Horton's "appeal" to them, and with our manifesto. No fewer than 168 replied, an unusually large proportion in so general an onset. Mr. Rogers describes the upshot of the replies by saying, "Some were in opposition, some were uncertain; but from the majority of them came whole-hearted support."

On January 12th, 1906, the long-expected battle was joined; the General Elections began. Into the general significance of the seismic change which resulted it is not my concern here to enter. It is enough to note the effect

"Loyal champion of the aged poor."

How we snowed leaflets.

"Free Church" candidates.

The political overturn.

on our movement. First of all, eleven members of our National Committee were returned to the new House of Commons : Mr. Burns, from Battersea ; Mr. Burt, from Morpeth ; Mr. John Johnson, from Durham, came back as Labour Members of the Liberal Party. So did Mr. Frederick Maddison, after a "khaki" break, having this time vanquished Socialism and Unionism at Burnley. Mr. Crooks re-entered from Woolwich as Member of the self-dependent Labour Party. Besides these five were six new altogether to the House, and carried on the crest of the latest wave of democracy. Our Chairman, Mr. G. N. Barnes was sent in by the Labour vote of the Blackfriars division of Glasgow over the heads of both Liberal and Unionist. Our Vice-Chairman, Mr. G. D. Kelley, also a Labour man pure and simple, came in triumph from South-West Manchester. Mr. Wilkie, the convenor of our Committee for Northumberland and Durham, and the first to propose our series of Conferences, was now Labour Member for Dundee. Mr. J. R. Clynes, Chairman of our first Manchester Conference, and since active member of our Lancashire Committee, now sat as Labour Member for North-East Manchester. Mr. A. H. Gill, also of our Lancashire Committee, was returned for Bolton. From our Yorkshire Committee came Mr. J. Parker, as Labour Member for Halifax. Our M.P.'s thus covered a wide area of industrial Britain. One (Mr. Burns) had become a Cabinet Minister. One (Mr. Burt) a Privy Councillor. Four belonged to the Liberal-Labour Group ; six were unhyphenated Labour men.

The portfolio of Pensions.

The return of these ten men made us perfectly sure that whatever the composition of the new Parliament, the demand of the National Committee would not fail for lack of doughty champions. Our cause would no longer be suppliant or apologetic : it would find vigorous and valiant advocacy from the lips of our own chief officers. The Labour Party adopted an excellent device for furthering its Parliamentary effectiveness. It assigned to each of its members a special subject of legislative concern. Mr. George Barnes was entrusted with the portfolio of Old Age Pensions.

The new House consisted of 380 Liberals, 22 Liberal-Labour men, 29 Labour men, 156 Unionists, and 83 Nationalists. This meant a Ministerial majority of 134 over all other Parties combined ; and when joined by Labour and Nationalist Parties, the total number arrayed against the Unionist remnant of 156 was 514, a majority reaching the enormous figure of 358. In a House so constituted, what was the outlook for Pensions ? Right through the electoral struggle, the headquarters of both the old Parties had stood

Our six new Members.

by their policy of official reticence in respect of Pensions. There had been references, more or less vague, to prospects of social reform: but of definite pledges to enact Pensions there were none. The Unionist leaders made no pronouncement on this question.

Neither did Liberal Ministers. The new Premier opened the campaign with a speech of great length in Albert Hall: but gave no promise of Pensions. The election addresses of Ministers were similarly innocent of definite response to the claims of the aged.

This silence was not accidental: it was designed. For Mr. Asquith himself, when introducing the Budget in 1908, declared: "His Majesty's present Government came into power and went through last General Election entirely unpledged in regard to this matter." "Entirely unpledged"—there we have avowed the official policy of the Liberal Party. There we have the explanation of the muzzle put upon the Liberal candidate in the Horsham bye-election, and doubtless in every election where the Liberal Central Association could speak with decisive authority.

The significance of this avowal must be carefully noted. Mr Asquith explained that Ministers "felt it right to enter into no binding engagement until they had had full time to survey the problem in all its aspects, and to lay a solid financial foundation for any future structure it might be possible to raise." This conscientious caution undoubtedly commands our moral praise. It stands in gratifying contrast to the irresponsible flippancy with which some politicians had flung out scheme after scheme, and had carried none. But there are other considerations based in the ethics of public life which the attitude of the Government ignored. According to the tradition of British politics, a General Election is the one time when the people shall declare its will. It is supposed to declare its will by giving a majority to the Party which undertakes to carry into effect the measures or principles on which the people has set its heart. Thus the proper constitutional way for the people to decree any great reform is to bestow the largest number of votes on the Party which pledges itself to that reform. The straightforward course, therefore, for a Party or Government which intends or desires to introduce a great reform is to give the people an opportunity of pronouncing on the question at the polls. I say "great" reforms, for minor reforms may be taken for granted as corollaries to the larger measures on which the people is definitely consulted. And Old Age Pensions are admitted on all hands to belong

Ministers
"entirely
unpledged!"

Caution and
the
Constitution.

Mandate not
asked for.

to the category of exceptionally great questions. Any Party or Government which goes to the polls deliberately resolved to remain "entirely unpledged" on a matter of this magnitude evidently does not intend to consult the people on the question: does not intend to give the people a chance of expressing its mind in the traditional manner by choice of Party: does not invite a popular mandate on the question: nay, does not *want* a mandate on the question. No British Government, least of all a Liberal Government, can assume the pose of a benevolent Dictator, asking for a plebiscite of blind confidence, keeping possibly in the back of his mind some boons which he will bestow upon his subjects, "if they are good," but which, until they have avowed their confidence, he will on no account promise to confer. No: it is the people which ought to decide what boons it will have, and by what Party it will have them. If the British democracy wants Old Age Pensions, it ought to have the opportunity of selecting for their enactment a Party—not entirely unpledged—but entirely pledged to enact them. Mr. Churchill's remark, "The Liberal Party does not promise Pensions: it gives them," was undoubtedly smart and effective; but it is neither Liberal nor democratic. For by what right, or on what principle can a Party "give" anything to the nation unless first the nation has resolved to have it, and therefore chooses the Party which most credibly "promises" to carry out its will? The British people is not yet reduced to the position of a suppliant for favours from the hand of Parties who may "give" or refuse at their lordly pleasure.

Happily, as we shall see, the official theory altogether broke down under the weight of popular determination. Ministers might flatter themselves that they were "entirely unpledged": the rank and file of Members had a very different tale to tell. When Mr. Asquith used the phrase "entirely unpledged," a hum of amused surprise went round the crowded Liberal Benches. Most of them, as it proved, were pledged to the hilt. Had the Party as a whole been as entirely unpledged as Ministers claimed to be, there would be solid ground for believing that the Government had no constitutional right to deal with the matter, the constituencies not having issued any mandate to that effect. But so effective had been the pressure exerted on all Parties that Mr. Hodge could say in Parliament that four-fifths of the Members of that House had been pledged to Pensions.

Before Parliament met, and before Ministers who declined to lead had found it expedient to follow, the Government was given an opportunity of declaring itself on the question. A

**British
Democracy no
beggar.**

**Four-fifths
pledged.**

**First
Government
pronounce-
ment.**

deputation from the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress waited on the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on February 15th, to submit a number of schemes. Among the rest was a plea voiced by Mr. W. J. Davis, of the National Brassworkers, for the introduction of a universal system of Old Age Pensions, to begin at 60, to be at least 5s. a week, and to be drawn from the Imperial Treasury. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in reply expressed his sympathy with every word Mr. Davis had spoken. He agreed that a general and generous scheme of Pensions would not discourage, but would promote thrift. The question, where the money was to come from he turned over to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Asquith was equally sympathetic, but argued that it was a question of ways and means; not objects or ideas. He went on to say, "For my part, as one who has control of the finances of the country, I should not be dealing honestly if I made anything in the nature, I will not say of promise or assurance, or held out anything in the nature of an expectancy, until I could see myself either in possession of, or in reasonable hope of possessing some fund that would be adequate to the purpose. For the moment I tell you frankly I do not possess it, and I have no reasonable expectation of possessing it. But there is a way, and only one way, by which this and many other social reforms which depend in the long run upon money, can be obtained. It is by cutting down extravagances, by reducing the debt, and by bringing the finances of the country into a healthier and sounder condition. That is the first step I urge. That is a step which I am sure the right hon. gentleman will agree with me it is the most earnest desire and fixed intention of the present Government to take."

"I have no reasonable expectation of possessing it." That was the first word concerning the wherewithal for Pensions which came from the Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer two months after taking office. Happily, it was not his last word.

"No reasonable expectation."

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE COMMONS UNANIMOUS FOR PENSIONS

A new type of Parliament.

The new Parliament assembled on February 19th. It was indeed a new Parliament. Not merely was the Party colour entirely different, the social type was even more distinct. When I first took tea at Spring Gardens in the old Progressive days, the London County Council impressed me as very much like a magnified deacons' meeting of the Nonconformist variety. The same sort of impression was made by one's first visit to the Parliament of 1906. Brilliance was not obtrusive. Rhetoric was rather resented. The "clever man" was at a discount. The prevailing tone was one of plain and strenuous purpose. Lord Morley has described it as morally the best Parliament he has seen. No doubt there was a tameness about its goodness : there was more of the draught-horse than of the mustang ; but perhaps for that reason it was better fitted to pull the heavy legislative pantechnicon along. In respect of social reform, the change of climate from its predecessor was as from Greenland to Queensland. Everywhere in the new House was felt the throb of intense practical energy and of eager hopefulness. This was, of course, the proper environment for our movement.

Australia leading.

The Colonies have been throughout on this question the pioneers and leaders of the Home Country. Barely had the new Parliament gathered at Westminster when, as though to remind us of the courageous initiative of the Colonies, out came the Report of the Australian Commonwealth Commission on Old Age Pensions. The Commission unanimously rejected Mr. Chamberlain's proposals to utilise Friendly Societies. It also rejected the German contributory scheme. It proposed that "the Federal Government shall grant pensions of 10s. weekly as a legal right, not as charity, to all persons of 65 years who have resided continuously in the Commonwealth for twenty-five years" and whose annual income does not exceed £25. In cases of permanent incapacity, it would grant a pension at the age of 60. Early

legislation on these lines was expected. But how slight the problem was in Australia as compared with the problem at home may be seen from the fact that the total annual cost of this generous scheme for the whole island continent was estimated at no more than £1,500,000. Nevertheless, the precedent was stimulating.

The new temper prevalent at Westminster in respect of the aged soon declared itself. There was no mention of Pensions in the King's Speech. In the old days that would have occasioned us much activity in the Lobbies, trying with uncertain results to get someone to move an amendment to the Address lamenting the absence of allusion to the rights of the aged; or if by the slightest delay that course were blocked, to induce someone in the Debate on the Address to press home our demand. Now, happily, the new Labour Members were in the House, with many others equally in earnest with them on the subject, equally earnest with them in demanding early legislation. In 1906 an amendment was not moved. But the Chairman of the National Committee, Mr. George Barnes, to whom the subject of Pensions had been by his Party specially allocated, seized an early opportunity in the course of the debate on the Address to state his position and ours and the purpose of the Labour Party in respect of Pensions. He was followed up in his main contentions by one of the chief capitalists of the country, Mr. W. H. Lever. The conjunction of Labour and Capital in a demand for large expenditure on the aged was a striking evidence of the national unanimity.

The House of Commons had not been six weeks in session before it devoted an evening to the subject. A resolution embodying the principle for which we had contended in season, out of season, for seven long years, was brought forward by the Labour Party on March 14th. It ran as follows: "That in the opinion of this House a measure is urgently needed in order that out of funds provided by taxation provision can be made for the payment of a Pension to all aged subjects of His Majesty in the United Kingdom."

The phrasing was awkward, but the meaning was plain. The prospect of the debate had aroused intense interest. It was only "private members' night." It followed immediately on an exciting Party struggle. But the House was full. The Strangers' Gallery was crowded, and many would-be spectators were turned away. By the kindness of Mr. Frederick Maddison, M.P., I was given a seat behind the bar on the floor of the House, where I was in closest touch with the proceedings. I need not add that so far as my will

Labour and Capital allied.

Our Resolution to the fore.

A full House.

could direct the effluent sympathy of the Soul of Society on each speaker and on the House as a whole, the effort was not wanting.

Mr. J. O'Grady. The resolution was moved by Mr. J. O'Grady, Labour Member for East Leeds. He laid stress on the increasing pace of industrial life, making it harder and harder for the aged; on the waste of national wealth in the workhouse system; on the ease with which Parliament could find money for wars and preparations for wars; and on the fact that Britain was on this question behind all other nations in Europe excepting Russia.

Mr. Grove. The motion was seconded by Mr. Grove, Liberal Member for South Northamptonshire. He called withering attention to there being only one Member on the front Opposition Bench, and only seven in the benches behind him. Such was Unionist interest in this great problem of Labour! He suggested a graduated income tax as the source of Pensions.

Mr. Asquith's sympathy. Then arose the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who held in his hand the key to the situation. Remembering his despondent forecast to the Trade Union deputation not four weeks ago, I awaited his words with natural apprehension. He began by declaring that the Government could offer no opposition to the House accepting the resolution. That was the first gain. He went further. He said of the principle put forward in the resolution that there was not merely no reluctance on the part of the Government to accept it, "but there is the strongest and keenest possible desire by every means we can find available and practicable to further the object the hon. gentleman has in view." He declared that the two most tragic figures of to-day—the man who wants work and cannot find it, and the man who is past work and has to beg for his bread and his bed—constitute a standing reproach to our civilisation and a perpetual problem for statesmen.

"The two most tragic figures." In thus selecting poverty arising from old age and poverty arising from unemployment as the master-problems of modern statesmanship, Mr. Asquith in effect readjusted the whole political perspective. Would that he and his huge majority had arranged their legislative programme accordingly, instead of wasting sessions and losing prestige on measures not concerned with these two supreme questions!

A new hope. The Chancellor of the Exchequer went on to discuss the cost. He took £13,000,000 as a modest estimate, £26,000,000 as an outside estimate of the annual cost of a national Pensions scheme. He pointed to retrenchment of expenditure on the Army and Navy and Education as a

necessary step towards attainment. He also looked to a readjustment of the incidence of taxation to yield a larger revenue. After this preamble, he took a stride ahead of what he had said on the 18th of February to the Trade Unionists. Then, it will be remembered, he had said of the fund to provide Pensions, "I do not possess it, and I have no reasonable expectation of possessing it." Now he said, "I am not without hope. . . . The Government hope, not at once, but gradually and I hope effectually, to make some progress towards the solution of this problem." He went on to recognise the presence of a driving power such as they had never had before in the House of Commons. It was obvious that this new force was the cause of Mr. Asquith's new hope.

A new
"driving
power."

In the debate which followed, I was forcibly impressed with a new and revolutionary fact. That was the profound deference paid in all parts of the House to the Labour Members. To see how right honourable gentlemen on both sides of the House kow-towed to the Labour men, turned to them for information, accepted their corrections, and stood in awe of their criticisms, was most refreshing. Too often it was the homage of conscious ignorance to expert knowledge. But there was more than that. There was a tremulous foreboding that these Labour men, so few in number, but so determined in purpose, had behind them unmeasured potencies of electoral strength. It was good to note the unctuous and comprehensive bow thus made by upper and middle classes to the working classes, as these last arrived at the seat of power.

Mr. Arnold Forster's speech was chiefly notable for the disavowal it extracted from Mr. Asquith of any intention to adopt a contributory scheme.

After the Chancellor's, the next most important speech was that of Mr. John Burns. As he put it, the Government had "accepted the resolution with the provision that means should be found to attain the end." It was pleasant to have an assurance from the President of the Local Government Board that "in his judgment the best, simplest, and fairest scheme was the universal scheme put forward by Mr. Charles Booth, by which everybody was to receive a pension irrespective of conditions or means." Verily the stone which the builders had rejected was now the headstone of the corner. In closing, Mr. Burns insisted that we "must bring to bear upon the Government such sufficient, reasonable, disciplined and well-organised pressure as would compel, or better still persuade, them to begin some form of Old Age Pension."

Tribute to
Charles Booth.

**Unanimity
unbroken.**

The resolution, with its affirmation of the principle of pensions for all in old age, was carried without a division, with only one solitary "No" against a thunder of "Ayes." It was not only accepted by the overwhelming Liberal majority. It was approved by the whole House. The tradition of unanimity which so surprised everyone when it was forming at the Labour Conferences at the different industrial centres, but which had remained ever since practically unbroken, received a significant confirmation in the House of Commons.

"You must be a proud man to-night, Mr. Stead," said my companion behind the bar, a stalwart Scottish member of the staff of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, as we rose to leave the House.

"Grateful" would have been the truer word.

G.—CONVINCING THE CABINET

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CONFERENCE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Both Cabinet and Commons were now committed to our general principles. But, alas ! any number of measures have, in the long history of Parliaments, been accepted "in principle" by House and Government which have never taken legislative form "in practice." It was necessary that no time be lost in following up the unanimous resolution of the Commons with the persistent pressure which Mr. Burns had invited. I suggested that a number of Members of Parliament specially interested in Pensions should be invited to meet without delay, and decide on the form of pressure to be applied. The idea was at once approved. Mr. Rogers had a busy time in maturing arrangements. On March 29th a special meeting of our Executive Committee, held at the House of Commons, resolved to issue the following circular :—

From principle to practice.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR FOR THE PROMOTION OF PENSIONS FOR ALL IN OLD AGE.

In view of the fact that on the 14th instant the Government adopted and the House of Commons affirmed without a division, the principle embodied in Mr. O'Grady's resolution, of Pensions for all in old age,

WE INVITE YOU and other Members of the House of Commons who have supported the demand formulated by the National Committee of Organized Labour, for universal Old Age Pensions

To a CONFERENCE in Committee Room No. 9 in the House of Commons, on Wednesday, April 4th, at noon, which is called to consider the policy now to be adopted and the

next steps to be taken to give legislative effect to the resolution of the 14th instant.

GEO. N. BARNES.
WILL CROOKS.
ENOCH EDWARDS.
CHARLES FENWICK.
J. KEIR HARDIE.
J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.
F. MADDISON.
D. J. SHACKLETON.
W. C. STEADMAN.
JOHN WARD.

FREDERICK ROGERS,

Organizing Secretary, National Committee.

House of Commons,

March 29th, 1906.

A new combination.

There accordingly assembled in Committee Room No. 9 the Right Hon. Thomas Burt in the chair, G. N. Barnes, Will Crooks, Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, Frederick Maddison, Chiozza Money, G. H. Roberts, Stephen Walsh, John Ward, E. L. Wardle, A. Wilkie, L. W. Wilson, P. W. Wilson, W. J. Wilson, Mr. Rogers, and I. There was not a little significance about this group. It was the first time in the new Parliament that representatives of the two wings of Labour had united with advanced Liberals; and they had united under the auspices of our National Committee. I was not a little apprehensive of the terms on which they would meet. Feeling had run very high during the elections, and there had been no small antagonism between the two Labour groups. But, as in the country, so in the House, Pensions exercised a synthetic power, and drew men to common action irrespective of Party. In the conversation which preceded definite resolutions, I urged that we should press for a Pensions Act next year. Mr. Burt, in his fatherly way, smiled at what he considered my youthful impetuosity, and agreed, also with a smile, that "there would be no harm in asking for it." The temper of the meeting was as peremptory as I had been, and eventually, on the motion of Stephen Walsh, seconded by Alexander Wilkie, the unanimous resolve was carried "that we demand an Old Age Pensions Act from the Government next session." There was some discussion as to linking Pensions with certain proposals of taxation, but in the end we decided to adhere to our hitherto uniform

A peremptory demand.

policy of refusing to identify Pensions with the odium or controversy sure to attach to any particular tax. Next we agreed, on the proposal of Frederick Maddison, seconded by Ramsay MacDonald, that an effort be made to obtain a private interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Finally we appointed a committee consisting of Mr. Burt, Mr. Barnes, and Mr. Chiozza Money to arrange for bringing the views of the Conference before the Chancellor. The three Progressive groups in the House being represented in this trio, we felt that we could leave to them to run our quarry down. The tradition of unanimity was still intact. **Unanimous.**

CHAPTER XXXIX

VOICES OF ORGANIZED RELIGION

The Bishop of Wakefield.

While the Commons was active, the country was by no means idle. On the 5th of May a great Conference was held at Wakefield. It was convened by the Yorkshire Federation of Trades Councils. There were present 66 representatives of 36 Co-operative Societies, and 280 of 154 Trade Societies. In all 376,800 members were represented. The Bishop of Wakefield presided, and, though acknowledging a sense of the difficulties in the way, spoke out bravely. Only the Labour movement, he said, could drive home to the community the deplorable facts of Age and Poverty. Any equitable scheme of Pensions for the aged poor was essentially Christian in its idea, and ought to receive the support of all Christian people. He called on his brother clergy and ministers and all the favourably circumstanced to investigate the problem of poverty, and to support the advocates of Old Age Pensions. Mr. Keir Hardie, who confessed in the *Labour Leader* that he found this "an inspiring week-end," said he was too old to be satisfied with pious opinions such as Parliament had emitted so often on Old Age Pensions. He wanted Acts. Mr. Rogers spoke with his usual eloquence, and scouted the suggestion of any contributory scheme. A resolution calling on the Government to enact without delay a national system of Old Age Pensions, and insisting that such legislation should precede any important reduction of taxation, was carried unanimously. The voice of Yorkshire Labour was uttered with emphasis and without ambiguity. And Yorkshire religion had found a fitting mouthpiece in the Bishop of Wakefield.

"An inspiring week-end."

The Congregational Union again.

The Congregational Union of England and Wales represents a great and influential section of British religion. It is also viewed with especial favour by the Liberal Party, who regard it more or less as an invaluable wing, permanently mobilized in pulpit and pew, of the Liberal army. To elicit an official expression of Congregational opinion

would, on both grounds, form an effective addition to the pressure we were bringing to bear on the Government. I was therefore glad to obtain the readily-given consent of the reference committee of the Union to a resolution being brought forward before the May Assembly, and I was fortunate in securing Mr. W. H. Lever, M.P., to move, and Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., to second this resolution:—

“That, in view of the election pledges of Members of Parliament, this Assembly urges upon His Majesty’s Government to give legislative effect in the next session of Parliament to the resolution which the House of Commons has this year passed without a division, demanding Pensions for His Majesty’s aged subjects.”

In speeches of great cogency and vigour the motion was urged upon the Assembly which filled the City Temple on May 10th, and, according to the official circular of the Secretary, was carried unanimously. The newspapers reported “only a single hand held up in the negative.” Possibly this single hand belonged to a person not entitled to vote. Congregationalism South of the Border was pledged to our demand.

Sunday evening, May 13th, saw a great concourse of workers assembled in Derby market place, to demand with impressive unanimity the immediate enactment of universal Old Age Pensions. The chairman, Mr. T. Ogden, J.P., declared that the meeting was fitly held on the Sabbath day, since the effort to secure Pensions for the aged was an essentially Christian work. Mr. George Barnes, M.P., in a forcible speech mentioned that already 171,323 people were drawing in Pensions from the Imperial Exchequer as much as £7,903,000. Mr. Richard Bell, M.P., urged that similar demonstrations of public opinion should be held in every centre of population, to force legislation on Parliament.

So in this merry month of May did the forces of organized Labour and organized religion mobilize again as at the first, and join hands to impose their peremptory mandate on Premier and Party and Parliament.

Unanimity.

“Essentially Christian.”

CHAPTER XL

IN COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 14

"Dead-slow" in Parliament.

Impelled by the importunity of the popular demand, which on every side was growing in urgency, we could not but feel impatient with the slow progress made inside of Parliament. The deputation of three had been appointed on April 4th to wait upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But April passed, and the Chancellor and deputation had not met. May passed—also without an interview. Mr. Rogers and I, in frequent visits to the House, kept the three duly reminded and informed of the expectancy of the country. The session seemed to be slipping away without our having lodged the needful representation in the ear of the Government. At last, in June, the long-desired interview came off. We were able to issue the following circular to the most sympathetic Members of the House :—

NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR FOR THE PROMOTION OF PENSIONS FOR ALL IN OLD AGE.

" On Wednesday, April 4th, you were invited to be present at a Conference of Members of the House of Commons to consider policy as regards Old Age Pensions, the circular of invitation being signed by the following gentlemen, Members of that House :—

GEORGE N. BARNES.
WILL CROOKS.
ENOCH EDWARDS.
CHARLES FENWICK.
J. KEIR HARDIE.
J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.
F. MADDISON.
D. J. SHACKLETON.
W. C. STEADMAN.
JOHN WARD.

" At that meeting the Right Hon. Thomas Burt, M.P., Mr. George N. Barnes, M.P., and Mr. L. G. Chiozza

Money, M.P., were appointed to wait on the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"I have the honour to ask you to a meeting at a Committee Room of the House of Commons, on Thursday, June 21st, at 8 o'clock. The Committee Room will probably be Committee Room No. 9, but you will receive a further notice as to the number of the room before Thursday. As this meeting is of the greatest importance my committee have desired me to express the hope that you will be able to attend."

FREDERICK ROGERS."

Browning Hall,

June 15th, 1906.

With much eagerness, therefore, twenty of us gathered in Committee Room No. 14. There were six Liberals present, W. T. Wilson, Chiozza Money, W. H. Lever, E. W. Davies, Stopford Brookes, P. Alden. The Liberal Labour group was represented by four, Right Hon. Thomas Burt, who occupied the chair, F. Maddison, W. Steadman, John Ward. Of the Labour Party eight were there, G. N. Barnes, W. Crooks, A. H. Gill, T. R. Glover, W. Hudson, G. D. Kelley, J. Parker, G. Wardle. Mr. Rogers and I were the only persons present who were not Members of Parliament.

A resolute twenty.

Mr. Burt gave a full account of the interview which the three had had with Mr. Asquith. It was not through any unwillingness to meet with the deputation, but solely owing to the pressure of his official duties that he had not been able to meet them sooner. Mr. Asquith, reported Mr. Burt, was entirely sympathetic, and agreed with the ideas which the three had expressed. But the sum needed was large. He could not make any immediate pronouncement. He preferred to wait the result of investigations now being made by a Select Committee into the graduation of the Income Tax, before giving a definite statement as to whether he was prepared to consider the question in his next Budget.

Mr. Asquith reported

Mr. George Barnes followed. He endorsed the report already given by Mr. Burt. He, too, had found Mr. Asquith "entirely sympathetic."

"entirely sympathetic."

The opinion expressed by the Chancellor was that Old Age Pensions formed one of the most urgent of public questions. Mr. Asquith suggested that the sum needed for its realization would be £15,000,000.

Cost.

This estimate, it will be seen, might at first seem to qualify the "entire sympathy" with the aims of our committee which was reported to the Chancellor. A pension of 5s. a week for all at or over 65 years of age would involve a possible expenditure of £26,000,000. But it must be remembered that Mr. Asquith was considering what was practicable within the limits of next year's Budget. And fifteen millions sterling would certainly meet the case of most of the aged who were in need.

Mr. Chiozza Money, with eye as ever on the finance of this and any question, expressed the opinion that the report of the Income Tax Committee to which Mr. Asquith had alluded was bound to be favourable. From close attention to the evidence brought before that committee, he believed that a much larger amount of taxable income would be discovered than was at present supposed to exist.

The report was unanimously received and felt to be reassuring.

The pure and simple policy.

The next step to be taken was the subject of a long and vigorous discussion. The proposals which we had so often encountered in the country now reappeared in Parliament: that under the plea of suggesting "where the money's to come from," the project of Pensions should be linked up with the imposition of certain taxes. To eager financial reformers Pensions seemed to offer the very impetus required for the advance of their cherished reforms. But again we pointed out the peril of identifying Pensions with any particular scheme of taxation, whether a super-tax on large incomes, or a tax on land, or a tariff on imported manufactures. As to enactment of Pensions there was unanimity. But as to the adoption of any fiscal expedient there was bound to be controversy. We wanted the national unanimity to be first safely embodied in legislation. Then it was for the nation's financial officers to devise the best ways and means of raising the required revenue. It was evidently a sore disappointment to one or two of the most ardent legislators to find that they could not get for their schemes of a revised national finance a lift upon the Pensions cart. But the Conference stood firm to keeping Pensions free from entangling alliances with projects of taxation, however seductive.

Wanted, a display of force.

The next step of a positive kind remained to be decided. The logic of the situation was plain. We had, it was evident, convinced the Government that both country and Commons desired the measure. We had still to convince the Government that that desire had reached a pitch of intensity that

would brook of no serious legislative delay. We had, in short, to make Ministers feel that Members of Parliament were not content with passing unanimous votes in the House, but were resolved on putting the matter through. There was needed a demonstration in force of the will of the House. So it was finally decided that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be asked to receive a large deputation of Members of the House of Commons at the beginning of the Autumn Session.

At the same time, to stoke the fires of purpose in Members "Next year." and Ministers, we decided that if the money could be obtained a vigorous agitation should be carried on throughout the coming winter. Every meeting should enforce the demand for Pensions in next year's Budget.

It was agreed that the sub-committee of three should become four by the addition of Mr. F. Maddison.

We parted, glad that we were as unanimous as ever, sure of progress already made, and confident of rapidly approaching success.

Next Sunday morning I had a vivid confirmation of the intense popular interest felt in securing justice to the aged. We went out to hold our usual open-air meeting in East Street, Walworth. It was seven-and-a-half years ago since we had all unconsciously begun the agitation on this very spot, with the bugle blast of news from New Zealand. Then it was November; this time it was Midsummer. The heat was grilling. The sun simply blazed down on the crowded market. To stand in the heat and the dust was no small ordeal. As it happened, the expected speakers did not arrive. I had to do all the speaking myself. I told the people of the way Pensions were moving forward: reported to them the proceedings in Committee Room No. 14, with the repeated assurances of the "entire sympathy" of the Government. And in spite of the glare and the glow and the noise, the men gathered and stood round by me, hundreds upon hundreds. Anyone knowing the shifting nature of a London crowd will understand what that means. And I went on to tell them of the movement for Old Age Homes which was already advancing on the heels of Old Age Pensions. I described Miss Faraday's gift of the Michael Faraday Home, her further gift of £1,000 founding the Browning Bethany Homes for Old Folks, and Mr. Newberry's gift of the beautiful site in the wooded Whyteleafe valley. Still the men stood in their solid hundreds under the burning sky. And I pictured the good time coming when Pensions and Homes would make old age a glorious sunset to human

What held
Walworth
crowd.

life, with something of the glow that told of a diviner home beyond. Seeing the crowd never wavered, I told it of the religious motives of our movement, and drove home the obvious moral. For a solid hour my one voice had spoken on these problems and prospects of Old Age: and for the whole of that time the crowd in its hundreds stood absorbed.

In sight of
the end.

The seventh annual meeting of the National Committee, held one month later, was naturally jubilant. It passed resolutions congratulating all friends of Pensions on the remarkable progress of the movement during the year, and supporting in advance a winter agitation.

CHAPTER XLI

PREMIER AND CHANCELLOR AND THE FOURFOLD TEST

A very vigorous indication of the national purpose was given at Rotherham on the 1st of September (1906). Industrial Yorkshire, which at the first Conference in 1899 had declared itself after many qualms and questionings in favour of our demand, grew more resolute and insistent as the years passed. Even the General Election in the beginning of 1906 did not satisfy it. It reinforced its mandate by the great demonstration at Wakefield in May, of which account has been given. It returned to the charge in September.

The Rotherham Trades Council had the honour of eliciting this fresh expression of Yorkshire opinion. At the Council's invitation there assembled in the Town Hall Assembly Rooms a most representative and decided Conference. There were 184 Trade Union delegates representing 11,180 members, 135 Friendly Society delegates representing 23,832 members, 88 Trades Council delegates representing 12,200 affiliated members. Altogether 407 delegates representing 47,202. Railway, Co-operative and Women's Guilds were also represented.

The main speeches were delivered by Mr. G. N. Barnes, M.P., and Mr. Rogers. They cleared away in advance whatever objections or difficulty had survived in the minds of delegates from previous Conferences. The discussion was entirely sympathetic. And the resolution in favour of the immediate enactment of a national system of Pensions was carried with entire and impressive unanimity. The dynamic import of this demonstration was duly conveyed to the Government, and the proceedings were widely reported.

Two days after the Rotherham Conference the Trade Union Congress, assembled at Liverpool, passed unanimously a fresh affirmation of the principle for which we had waged

Trade Union
Congress,
1906.

an eight-years' campaign. It also "instructed the Parliamentary Committee to circularize all Unions affiliated, urging them to bring pressure upon Members of Parliament through their local branches, and to use every other effort to ensure the passing of an Old Age Pensions Bill next year." The resolution was moved by Mr. George Barnes, M.P., and seconded by Mr. Pete Curran, M.P. It is easy to infer the amount of popular agitation, extending all over the country, which was thus generated.

At the Leysian Mission. The Labour movement in politics and economics was busily engaged in furthering the cause of the aged. The Labour movement in religion, operating through the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Meeting, had given second birth to the movement, and continued active in its support. One of the biggest and busiest, as well as one of the most centrally situate, of these Men's Meetings was at the Wesleyan Leysian Mission, Clerkenwell. There in the month of October Mr. Rogers delivered an eloquent vindication of our position; and the Mission published a verbatim report of his speech in a penny pamphlet entitled "A Plea for Old Age Pensions." When a movement which is conquering Parliament and bending Ministers to its will finds itself voiced in a Wesleyan Mission tract, there can be little doubt left anywhere of its being essentially religious and impartially national.

Deputation arranged. When the Autumn Session of Parliament assembled, our Committee of Four lost no time in pressing upon the Government the request formulated in Committee Room No. 14, that a deputation of Members be received on the question of Pensions. At last they secured a promise that the Prime Minister would receive a deputation on November 20th. On that meeting, accordingly, all our efforts were concentrated. Whatever will-force we could exercise or enlist, by means visible or invisible, by personal persuasion or electoral pressure, by radiation of influence telepathic or supplicatory, was trained on the persons expected to participate in that memorable appointment.

A concert of prayer: at Cambridge On the 11th of November I happened to be at Cambridge on business with the University Free Church Union, and was invited to address the Men's Brotherhood held in the Baptist Church. The gathering was almost entirely composed of working men, with a very few 'Varsity men present. I spoke on the Pensions movement, its wonderful unanimities and its approaching triumph. I laid special stress on the part which prayer had taken in the movement, reiterating the conviction that it owed more to the Power evoked by prayer than

to any other agency. I invited the direct co-operation of my hearers, both on the mundane and on the higher planes of action, and they most cordially responded. They promised each to send a postcard to their representative in Parliament, pressing him to support the deputation of Tuesday week. What was of vastly greater importance, they pledged themselves to pray that the occasion might be signally used of God to advance His purpose for the aged. The earnest prayers of these men I knew were of more dynamic value than any merely political demonstration.

At Browning Hall on the following Sunday repeated requests were made for the concentration of prayer on the opportunity presented by Tuesday evening's deputation. The Fellowship of Followers met on the Sunday evening. Followers were reminded of the wonderful answers which had been granted to their prayers in earlier stages of the movement, and were urged to focus all their powers of intercession on the meeting which might effect so much.

Surrounded and pervaded by this prayerful expectancy, we went up to Westminster on the 20th of November. The interview was to take place in the Prime Minister's room. The deputation was, strictly speaking, to consist exclusively of Members of Parliament. The etiquette of the House is, we understood, very exacting in this respect. The meeting was, moreover, to be private. Reporters were not to be admitted. The chances seemed faint that either Mr. Rogers or I should be admitted. Naturally we wanted to be present. So much depended on what would be said that we felt we ought to be there. Furthermore, the deputation had been arranged by the committee-room meetings which we had convened and at which we had actively assisted. A much deeper reason weighed with me. I did not doubt that there would be present those who would anticipate and follow every step in the proceedings with prayer. But I had asked so many friends far and near to join with me in prayer that night: I knew that their prayers would be linked with mine in such close personal sympathy: I felt myself in a sense at once the accumulator and the conductor of their supplicatory force: that, putting aside all mere personal desire, I seemed to be needed in the gathering. Happily, the way was opened. As the Members went trooping into the room, Mr. Thomas Burt, who shepherded and introduced the deputation, waived the Parliamentary scruple and invited us to enter. We passed in promptly.

The deputation was, we were informed, unusually large. It numbered between seventy and eighty. When Mr. Burt,

and in
Walworth.

The
momentous
interview.

A number
needing no
apology.

in his introductory speech, said he had been instructed to apologise for the shortness of the notice, for, had Members received longer notice, their numbers would have been appreciably greater, a general laugh broke out! And Mr. Burt hastened to say he thought perhaps after all they were numerous enough to convey the evident feeling of the House. So far as we could see, there were no Unionist or Irish Members present. The gathering consisted entirely of Liberals and Labour men.

Mr. T. Burt.

Mr. Burt, in opening the case, went back, with the sure instinct of the statesman trained to measure public forces, to the series of Conferences in 1898-9 which had inaugurated the present movement. He referred in just and generous terms to the leadership of Mr. Charles Booth in these Conferences, and declared that Mr. Booth's principles had been accepted by every form of organized Labour throughout the length and breadth of the land. Mr. Burt went on to enforce the reasonableness of universal Pensions and the need for early legislation. He adduced the hardening conditions and the increasing pace of modern industry, as additional reason for saving the aged from a strain beyond their powers. Mr. G. N. Barnes followed with a similar plea for urgency.

The employer's point of view.

Mr. Theodore Taylor, of Batley, one of the impassioned Christian enthusiasts of the House, a strong advocate of profit-sharing and a great believer in the P.S.A. movement, one of the men whose friendship I had prized long before I went down into Walworth, spoke from the Liberal and employer's point of view. He said that all employers, including the best of them, were now agreed that provision for the aged was beyond the power of any employer or any voluntary association: it must devolve upon the State.

The views of the Trade Union group (better known as the Liberal Labour men) were voiced by Mr. Enoch Edwards.

The position both of workman and employer having been stated with much force and fire, and supported by vigorous demonstrations of approval from the rest of the deputation, the Prime Minister rose to make reply.

**Soul-
innervation.**

I was standing by a pillar in the crowd. I need hardly say that every speaker had been backed up by the whole of me in prayer that the right argument and the right word and the right tone of feeling might be given. But when the policy of the Government came to be enunciated, the soul was focussed with an intenser importunacy on each of the two speakers. On each the will was projected with all its own force and with the force of all the wills behind it, far

away or near, and, what was far more, with the conscious reinforcement of the Will Supreme. The answer corresponded marvellously with the prayer.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was more than usually sympathetic and complaisant. He said that he entirely agreed with everything that had been said on behalf of the deputation. He was only prevented from at once acceding to our request by two things—want of time and want of money. He accepted the position of our spokesmen—that the only satisfactory method of dealing with the question was by a universal plan. A Pension should be paid to every aged person who applied for it—with certain well-understood exceptions. He was against contributory schemes, because they involved inquisitorial machinery altogether inconsistent with the best traditions of the country and the thought of its people. Far from a pension sapping independence, or undermining thrift, it would do the precise opposite. It would give a sense of security and strength to a man through life to know that at all events some provision was assured against the day of feebleness. His conviction was that any scheme must be universal in its application: and it must be supplied by the State which alone had the money required. He concluded by assuring us that the matter would be dealt with as soon as time and money permitted.

Then the Chancellor of the Exchequer arose. We felt that he held the key to the situation. It was in his power to open or shut the door of hope. On him all our thought and purpose were fixed in a passion of concentration. Mr. Asquith began by endorsing all that his chief had said. He did much more. He surprised his best friends by the warmth, nay, the only half suppressed passion with which he spoke. I heard afterwards that his emotion was regarded as the most striking feature of the whole evening. As one of the fathers of the House said to me, with a touch of sardonic humour in his tone, "No one would accuse Mr. Asquith of emotionalism." But on the question of the aged Mr. Asquith spoke with a glow of feeling which was said never to have shone from him before. I caught his glance as he said that no Chancellor of the Exchequer with funds available—no man that had the means—would ever be so lacking in the rudiments of humanity as to refuse to come to the help of helpless age. And at the back of his eye I saw the red fire. It was a glare of purpose that meant woe to the man who dared to block his path, and wrath to the man who dared to doubt his motive. Twice I have seen that red fire behind the eye, and each time it has suggested a

**The Premier
acquiescent.**

True thrift.

**The passion of
Mr. Asquith.**

**A glimpse
within.**

whole volcano of hidden passion, which, when the seismic moment came, would shake the world. Nothing, he went on to say, lay nearer his heart than that he should be able to submit to the House of Commons a financial plan to provide for the veterans of industry. Like the Prime Minister, he was in favour of a universal plan. It must, moreover, be a plan entirely dissociated from the Poor Law, either in its present form, or in any form that it might assume in the future. In closing, he declared the Government regarded the question as one of extreme urgency.

Here indeed was victory.

Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer had both endorsed in the most emphatic and unequivocal manner the four main principles for which we of the National Committee had been contending for more than seven years. They had declared :—

1. Pensions must be universal, not partial.
2. Pensions must not be on a contributory basis.
3. Pensions must be kept apart from the Poor Law, reformed or unreformed.
4. Pensions are a matter of extreme urgency.

These were the principles for upholding which we had been derided as Utopian and visionary. These were the principles against which "practical politicians" had patronized us with advice less acceptable than open derision. And now they were openly adopted by the official and responsible leaders of the largest majority seen in Parliament for two generations !

It was with no perfunctory gratitude that Mr. Burt thanked Ministers for the reception we had experienced. We should, of course, have been better pleased if the Government had definitely promised to introduce an Old Age Pensions Bill in the next Session of Parliament. But "extreme urgency" backed by an invincible majority in the Commons must mean early legislation or nothing.

The official report of the interview was drawn up by Mr. George Barnes, submitted to the Premier, and approved. It was then given widest currency in the Press. After satisfying the newspapers with our views of the result, Mr. Rogers and I went home happy and thankful.

An exact anniversary. It was exactly eight years before, on the 20th of November, 1898, that the Hon. W. P. Reeves had delivered his memorable speech in Browning Hall, and by expounding the Old Age Pensions Act of New Zealand had set agoing

the movement which had now won the complete endorsement of the British Government. It was another of those strange coincidences in which our work abounds.

Many were the messages of thanks sent round to friends who had joined the forces of their wills with ours in prayer. To the Cambridge Men's Brotherhood a special letter of thanks was sent.

H.—HOPE DEFERRED AND LABOUR DEFIANT

CHAPTER XLII

TOO MUCH FAITH IN MINISTERIAL MAN

Agitation at full blast.

Three towns' Conference.

Grounds for legislating at once.

The expressions of national opinion now multiplied so rapidly on every side as to make it no longer possible to keep count of them. After the pronounced utterances of Prime Minister and Chancellor of Exchequer, even official Liberals felt they might speak freely in support of Pensions; and the rank and file naturally grew more exuberant. Through all the channels of associated industry, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress was sending a tide of vigorous demonstration. And the Labour Members, always vocal on the subject, as soon as the passing of the Trade Disputes Bill was safe and their first objective secured, devoted their almost undivided attention to the pushing of Pensions. These vast accessions to the forces of propaganda need no further description; their volume may be readily imagined. But a representative Conference stands out from the ruck of meetings, as a great battle from a crowd of minor engagements. So mention must be made of the 208 delegates from the religious, Trades, Labour, Social, and Friendly Societies in the three towns, Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehouse, who assembled in Plymouth Co-operative Hall on the afternoon and evening of December 8th. It was addressed by our Vice-Chairman, Mr. G. D. Kelley, M.P., and by Mr. Rogers, as well as by an array of local speakers. The question was thoroughly thrashed out, and absolute unanimity achieved.

The impact of all this opinion on the mind of a Government which declared itself eager to act, naturally fostered the expectancy of legislation in 1907. The fate of the highly controversial measures which the Government had carried

through the Commons but which the Lords had coolly eviscerated or more unceremoniously rejected, was a strong argument on our side. A measure ordering the Treasury to pay a weekly allowance to the aged would be a Money Bill, with which the Peers had no constitutional right to meddle. Pensions were demanded by all the working classes : and the Lords were afraid of Labour. Nay, the nation as a whole was resolved on having Pensions, and the Upper House in presence of a unanimous nation is as timid as a mouse. The moral of the situation seemed perfectly obvious. As a matter of simple justice, reforms demanded by the entire nation ought to precede those demanded only by a majority, even though a large majority. And as a matter of tactics the Government would heighten its prestige by bringing in measures certain to pass into law, whereas it would inevitably discredit itself and weaken its hands for the ultimate encounter by pushing forward Bills which the Lords could fling out with impunity. An Old Age Pensions Act in 1906 instead of the mutilated abortion of an Education Bill, would have put the Government in an immeasurably stronger position, and would have saved it much ignominy. Besides, the assurance of the two chief Ministers that Pensions stood first in the category of extreme urgency was a fair ground for expecting immediate legislation.

But the King's Speech, when it appeared on February 12th, **In vain!** was absolutely silent on Pensions.

The only answer that could be made to this silence was an Amendment to the Address. Here again we had reason to be grateful for the presence of the new Labour Members in the House. There was no need now to hurry up to the Lobby, to run the certain gauntlet of cynical or indifferent or patronizing M.P.'s, in the uncertain hope of finding some Member zealous enough and prompt enough to give the necessary notice within the few hours officially available. The thing was done immediately, without any spur from outside. On February 13th, Mr. George Barnes moved on behalf of the Labour Party an Amendment which added the following words : " But humbly express our regret that Your Majesty's advisers have not seen fit to include amongst the measures promised for this session one making provision of an adequate pension for the aged poor." After a brief survey of the facts of aged poverty, and after remarking on the impossibility of just discrimination, Mr. Barnes turned to the question of cost, and showed that already 200,000 pensioners, national and municipal, received ten millions sterling annually. Four hundred and ninety thousand old people in

Justice.

Policy.

Amendment to Address.

Contrasts.

workhouses cost, not 5s. a week merely, but more than twice 5s. In their case Pensions would mean a saving of public money. There was, he pointed out, plenty of wealth available for taxation. In 1900 nine men died leaving estates worth £19,320,000. Since 1900, forty-six persons had left £78,577,690. He closed by inquiring what Mr. Asquith was going to do with his anticipated surplus. Mr. Hodge seconded with pungent brevity, observing that the time for talking had passed and the time for action had come.

This was no stage thunder.

The Labour Party intended to push the matter to a division, and it was expected that the Liberal-Labour men would vote with them against the Government. With the Unionists added, the total adverse vote would have been unusually large. From this awkward prospect the Government was saved by the persuasive eloquence of Mr. Asquith.

The Chancellor as charmer.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was exceedingly sympathetic in his reply. He publicly repeated his repudiation of all so-called contributory schemes "as altogether inadmissible and unworkable." He again declared that Pensions must be dissociated from the ordinary machinery of the Poor Law. But he thought it neither politic nor expedient to proceed by direct frontal attack, or attempt to take the whole position by a single blow. He would, he added, have to move tentatively and by stages. But no Member was more anxious than he to make a beginning. There was no object which his colleagues and himself more ardently desired.

Labour disarmed.

Now when a Chancellor with a substantial surplus in view declares himself more anxious than any other Member of the House to make a beginning with a reform which costs money, and moreover expresses himself with intense fervour and evident sincerity, even the most suspicious of Members may be pardoned for expecting legislation during that very Session. And when it was remembered that in the year when Free Education was achieved, that reform was not promised in the Queen's Speech, but was brought in with the year's Budget, the expectation was natural that Pensions would arrive with the Budget in a month or two. So the Labour and Liberal-Labour Members were disarmed, and Mr. Shackleton announced that they had decided not to go into the Lobby against a Government which was apparently on the verge of doing what they wanted.

"Further inquiry!"

Then Mr. John Burns spoke. His speech seemed to put Pensions as far off as Mr. Asquith's had brought them near. He enlarged upon the number of workmen who by their own thrift had secured Pensions, and left the impression—which

happily was later repudiated by the speaker—that these pensions would be regarded as a bar to receiving State Pensions. He also spoke as if many essential inquiries were still to be made, and appealed to the various bodies of organized Labour to assist in making these inquiries.

As Pensions had been for years the subject of unceasing investigation, Labour Members felt that the plea of further inquiry was unnecessary, and meant putting the enactment of Pensions a long way beyond the approaching Budget. Mr. Keir Hardie expressed their disappointment. They had, he said, gathered from the utterances of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Government meant to give Pensions this year. But Mr. Burns's plea for fuller inquiry was only an excuse for postponing the matter another twelve months. Had Mr. Burns spoken before the Labour Party decided not to go to a division, that decision would not have been taken. But having taken it, they would abide by it.

The matter was pressed to a division, but not by the Labour men. Sixty-one supported the amendment against a Ministerial vote of 213.

We now see that the Labour Party had confided too generously in the avowed intentions of the Government. The confidence was not justified by the event. They may be forgiven their frank tribute to human veracity. For when a man who has the money in his pocket to buy a certain boon declares with every appearance of sincerity that no man desires to buy it more than he, and that there is nothing he more wants to buy than that particular boon, it is natural for guileless men to believe that he will buy it right away with the money in his pocket. The touching trustfulness of the Labour men does them more honour than it does those they trusted.

In the light of later events we must regret their "too much faith" in Ministerial man. For if both wings of the Labour Party, with a strong Unionist following, had gone into the Opposition Lobby, the Government might have been led to reflect that there were men as determined to secure justice for the aged as there were income tax payers clamorous for reduction. The hands of the Government might, in short, have been forced. The surplus might have gone in Old Age Pensions and not in relief to the income tax payer. The Government would have shown that the most urgent and most desired of all the objects they had in view was not the further easement of the middle classes, but really, as they said, the deliverance of the aged worker from want and shame.

Misplaced confidence.

What might have happened.

CHAPTER XLIII

MR. ASQUITH'S "LARGE IF"

Middle-class alarm.

The pause between the Debate on the Address and the introduction of the Budget was occupied by certain newspapers possessed of more ingenuity than perspicacity, in announcing "wildcat" Pension schemes to be realized in the course of the year by means of the expected surplus. A fact of much more serious import for the shaping of the Government's policy was the result of the elections for the London County Council. The middle classes of the metropolis, in the Press-manufactured horror of Progressive collectivism, simply "rushed" the elections, and proved themselves strong enough to carry with them a preponderance of working class votes. The Government would inevitably take note that the self-interest of the middle classes once thoroughly aroused had more electoral potency than could be generated by the plain needs of the far larger industrial population. Perhaps this little lesson in political mechanics helped to fix the eventual disposal of the surplus. Whether any change was effected in the policy of the Government, or whether the Government had never intended to legislate before 1908, certain it is that the Budget of 1907 brought with it no immediate grant of Pensions.

The surplus.

The annual statement was made on April 18th, and was awaited with almost sensational excitement. House, galleries, and lobbies were crowded. The Chancellor announced an estimated surplus of £3,233,000. Leaving taxation unaltered, that sum could have provided with 5s. a week as many as 148,000 old folks. The money was practically there, waiting for the Ministers to dispose of it. What did they do with it?

"Much cry"

Mr. Asquith's words upon Pensions in his Budget speech are more emphatic than any description could make them: "This I do say, and I wish to say it with all the emphasis of which I am capable, speaking for the whole of my colleagues, that in the sphere of finance we regard this as the most serious

and the most urgent of all the demands for social reform." These are strong words, and seem to demand a sequel equally strong in action. Did then the Chancellor go on to say: "Therefore this demand must take precedence of every other: the claims of debt, the claims of the income tax payer, cannot for a moment compete with the dire need of the worn-out workers; and the whole of our surplus shall be spent in Pensions to begin a few months hence. July 1st, or at latest September 1st, shall see pensions of 5s. a week distributed to a great company of the aged"? Alas! nothing of the kind was spoken. The passage ended in a curious anti-climax. The "Little wool."
 mountains of emphasis with which it opened ended in the ridiculous mouse of a hope that could barely squeak. The Chancellor went on to say: "It is our hope—I will go further and say that it is our intention, before the close of this Parliament—yes, before the close of the next Session of this Parliament, if we are allowed to have our way—it is a large if—to lay firm the foundations of this reform." Then he went on to show, by the immediate changes he proposed, what were the demands which he judged more serious than "the most serious" and more urgent than "the most urgent." "The credit of this country remained better and higher than that of any other country in the world," so Mr. Asquith said: therefore it must take precedence of the trembling and penniless old man: and fifteen millions must go to the payment of debt. Imports and exports suggest a national prosperity without parallel: therefore the income tax payer who earns his income and has at the very least £120 a year must be put before the "mismatched pair" of Age and Want. One and a quarter millions sterling must go to the people who are so well off as to come under the income tax. And after national credit and middle class comfort have been attended to, what about these poor old people who—with tremendous emphasis—have "the most serious and most urgent" demand of all on national finance? Well, some time "before the close of this Parliament"—perhaps "before the close of the next Session of this Parliament"—"IF we have our way"—we hope—nay, intend—"to lay" no more than "the foundations of this reform." Disproportion between words and deeds could scarcely further go.
 The aged put off for—whom?

Happily the "large IF" gave way towards the close of the long speech to a promise that had about it something like the hard metallic clank of actual cash down. He said: "We shall have begun to provide the nucleus of a fund for the relief of necessitous old age. I shall have in hand next year, free, and earmarked for the purpose, the £1,500,000 to which "At least 2½ million."

I have just referred, together with the uncollected arrears of this year's income tax amounting to £750,000, which will make a total of at least £2,250,000, and an additional sum from the increased Estate Duties."

Pensions
beginning to
be.

Pensions were, after all, coming into being in 1907. Not paid out to the aged, but paid in to the Treasury. We were glad to calculate that every day as it passed was to secrete on the average £6,000 for Pensions. Every day there was being stored, so we reckoned, a year's pension of 5s. a week for 460 pensioners. True, another year, or perhaps two years, of needless suffering must be endured by the aged, in order that our superlative national credit might be made more superlative, and that our comfortable middle classes might be made more comfortable. But the money for Pensions was actually rattling into the nation's coffers. That was our consolation. Knowing, as we did, the temper of the House and the temper of the country, we had little doubt about the Government—barring war or earthquake or other unforeseen convulsion—being forced to legislate before 1908 had passed. It was a question—not of the Government, but of the country being allowed to have its way.

Contrasted
disappoint-
ments.

I was not able to secure a seat in the gallery of the House while the Chancellor made his Budget speech. I was, however, in the crowded lobby, and noted the curious way in which item after item in the speech oozed out and spread amongst the throng. When, for example, word came that 3d. in the £ would be knocked off earned incomes, but only under £2,000, I observed one gentleman remark to another as they rose to go, with a sigh of resignation: "Well, I suppose we shall have to worry through as before." The resignation of the disappointed £2,000-a-year man under an undiminished income tax naturally did not appeal very strongly to my sense of pity: but it suggested by very contrast the disappointment at the other end of the scale—the hope deferred of the old man and the old woman with no income at all.

When I returned from the House of Commons to Browning Hall I found a bevy of pressmen waiting to report the verdict of the National Committee on the Budget. I at once communicated to them the pleasure we felt in knowing that Pensions were already accumulating, and at the same time our deep regret that the Liberal Government, like its Unionist predecessor, had put the comfort of the middle class before the bitter needs of the aged toilers.

A hint of
approaching
Spring.

On the same evening happened to be held the twelfth Annual Public Meeting of our Settlement. Mademoiselle de

Montmort, a fair young French noblewoman with democratic sympathies, was installed as President: and from behind a shimmer of spring roses delivered her inaugural address. The speeches which followed later, and laid joyful stress upon the certain prospect of Old Age Pensions, offered a significant commentary on the last words, which formed also the keynote of the address: "I can see the work of revolutions achieved by the Spirit of Love."

CHAPTER XLIV

WARNINGS TO THE GOVERNMENT, ELECTORAL AND OTHER

Mr. W. H. Lever's Bill.

No mandate!

The claims of the aged came up again for discussion in the Session of 1907. The occasion was a Private Member's Old Age Pensions Bill. Its second reading was moved on Friday, May 10th. Friday generally shows a very thin House. But so great was the interest in Pensions that there was an unusually large attendance of Members. Mr. W. H. Lever expounded the provisions of his Bill. It aimed at providing 5s. weekly pensions in three successive instalments : in the first year to those above 75, in the second year to those above 70, in the third to those above 65. He reckoned the cost of the three stages at (1) five to six and a half millions, (2) twelve to thirteen and a half millions, and (3) from eighteen to twenty millions. He would draw nine-tenths of the money required from the Imperial Treasury, and one-tenth from local rates. He would raise the Pension fund by a graduated income tax, starting at incomes of a pound a week. The officers would be the registrars of births, deaths, and marriages. Sir Francis Channing, from of old one of the doughtiest champions of our cause, insisted, in seconding, on the Pension being given not out of pity for misery, but as a matter of justice, as a right. Mr. Harold Cox, as keen in logic and as remote from life as ever, argued that as the Government had given no pledge to the electors, they had no mandate from the country to launch on so large an expenditure. Logically, the argument was entirely sound and unanswerable. The only flaw was the omission of the fact that though Ministers might be unpledged, the House was pledged, and heavily pledged, to Pensions. Mr. John Burns announced that there was a general conclusion that "something must be done," and he repeated Mr. Asquith's Budget promise. The Government accepted the principles of the Bill. Mr. Cox's amendment found only nineteen supporters. The Bill was read a second time. The whole sitting was occupied

in discussing it. But nothing more definite was extracted from the Government.

The dissatisfaction which we had expressed with the delay of the Government in dealing with its admitted duty to the aged found frequent and vigorous confirmation wherever working men met to consider their grievances. The bye-election at Jarrow, which took place about the middle of the year, gave the Government a plain hint of the seismic changes which might ensue if the question were longer trifled with. For the one seat just vacated by the death of a Liberal, there were no fewer than four candidates—a Liberal, a Unionist, an Irish Nationalist, and a Labour man. The contrast between the professions and performances of the Government in respect of the aged was forcibly commented on; and Mr. Asquith was appealed to by his own supporters to define his attitude. He replied, quoting the words in his Budget speech which promised “at least £2,250,000” for Pensions next year, and reiterating the pledge there given. He did not, however, succeed in satisfying the electors. They preferred to send up to Westminster a man who was bent on securing Pensions for all in old age, and who was *not* at the beck and call of the Whips of a procrastinating Government. The figures were ominously significant:—

Pete Curran (Labour) ...	...	...	...	4,698
Unionist ...	...	...	...	3,930
Liberal ...	...	...	...	3,474
Nationalist ...	...	...	...	2,122

This vote, cast on the historic Fourth of July, was a declaration of independence which could not fail to impress the Government. The impression was deepened on July 18th, when the Colne Valley Division returned Victor Grayson (Socialist) clear over the heads of both Liberal and Unionist. This was an earthquake shock. Its significance was variously interpreted. A business friend of mine who was present during the election was in no doubt as to the dominant issue. He said: “The Colne Valley election was not a victory for revolutionary Socialism. It was a victory for Old Age Pensions. Pensions carried Grayson to the head of the poll.”

The menace of Colne Valley.

About the same time there appeared the Tables, with Preliminary Memoranda, prepared by the Local Government Board in connection with the question of Old Age Pensions. They supplied a reminder of the conclusions and estimates of Commission and Committees on the subject during recent years. Conclusions were summarised to the effect that of persons over 65 years of age then in the workhouse only 10

L.G.B. Tables.

Jarrow's Declaration of Independence.

Indoor results. per cent. would be likely to leave if pensioned. "The withdrawal of this small number of persons would leave the expenditure on indoor relief, except on actual food and clothing, practically unaffected." This was only a belated confirmation of what we had suggested to us by the census which Miss Edith Sellers took some years previously of the occupants of the Newington Workhouse in the Borough of Southwark. As we pointed out when we received her report, a considerable time would have to elapse before the habit and expectancy of the working classes would be so far altered as to provide for their aged relatives otherwise than in the workhouse. Gradually, however, and certainly the numbers entering the workhouse would inevitably shrink.

Outdoor results. The Blue Book went on to state that the amount of outdoor relief given to persons over 65 years of age in the United Kingdom had been estimated at from £1,630,000 to £1,858,000. This sum, it might be assumed, would be saved so far as Poor Law expenditure was concerned. The paupers 65 years of age and upwards were said to form 18 per cent. of the total population of the same age, and in the rural Unions 21 per cent.

Existing Pensioners. Fresh matter was introduced in the returns registered or estimated of persons already in receipt of pensions of any kind, from Army, or Navy, Civil Service, police, local authorities, school teachers' pension fund, Trade Unions, Friendly Societies, charities. The total number of pensioners thus computed was about a quarter of a million, receiving about ten and a half millions sterling a year.

There was no account given of the number of pensioners of and over the age of 65, which is the material fact from the point of view of Old Age Pensions. The average age of War Office pensioners *at death* is 60 years. Police retire at 46 or 47, or a few years later. All that the Blue Book stated was: "There is a reasonable probability that a large number of the pensioners would be advanced in years." It also added: "How far the numbers of any existing pensioners can for practical purposes be deducted from the number of persons pensionable, it is impossible to say."

Why these figures? This parade of a quarter of a million pensioners of dubious age, and of over half a million persons pensionable on ground of possessing 10s. a week in their own right, gives an impression of a desire on the part of those who prepared the statistics to haul down the flag of Pensions for all in their old age as a civil right, which both Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer had nailed to the mast.

This Blue Book, in short, renewed the unpleasant impression left by Mr. Burns's speech on the Pensions Amendment to the Address. In conversation subsequently Mr. Burns explained that the information was offered in order that in the event of Pensions being introduced by instalments the first instalment should be devoted to the relief of those who at present have no pensions of any kind. Existing pensioners might then wait for later instalments of a universal system.

The working classes were distinctly uneasy, and were growing restive.

Labour impatient.

The annual meeting of our National Committee, held at Browning Tavern on July 21st, gave voice to the general feeling in the following section of the main resolution :—

“ It desires to call attention to the result of recent bye-elections as a proof of the growing impatience of the working classes at this delay [of Pensions legislation] and anticipates similar results in other working class constituencies unless official assurance is forthcoming that the first place in the legislative programme next year will be given to a measure providing pensions for all in their old age.”

At the same meeting a letter from Mr. George Cadbury was read, which supplied an interesting indication of the progress which had been registered, as watched by one of the keenest watchmen of social welfare.

Ten years ago.

Ten years ago, he wrote, it was all but hopeless to arouse public opinion on the question of Old Age Pensions, and when it was aroused men only were considered. He had always held the opinion that the wives of working men earning low wages had the greater claim.

Verily, much had happened in these ten years.

The autumn and winter which followed saw a very vigorous campaign of public meetings in support of the demand for immediate legislation. There were three streams of propaganda kept flowing in full tide. Our National Committee was active, and Mr. Rogers was in demand at any number of meetings. Our winter campaign began as early as August 30th, with a great open-air demonstration of Labour organizations at Bristol. The second line of force was set in motion by the Trades Union Congress, which in its session at Bath in September not merely re-affirmed the principle it had asserted eight years in succession. It instructed its Parliamentary Committee to hold a series of meetings. These were held in November, December, and January in Manchester, Dundee, Leeds, Birmingham, Newport (Monmouthshire), Newcastle-on-Tyne, London, and Dublin. The third factor was the resolve of the Labour Members to make

Three lines of propaganda.

Monster petition.

Pensions the special subject of agitation throughout the country—a policy endorsed officially by the Labour Representation Committee in its annual meeting in January. A fourth line of attack was that adopted by the Yorkshire Federation of Trades and Labour Councils, which laid itself out with characteristic energy over a period of nine months for working up an agitation in support of Old Age Pensions. They approached the officers of Co-operative Societies, Friendly Societies, Trade Societies, Trades Councils, and secured a very gratifying response. Five hundred and sixty petitions were signed on behalf of 799,750 members. The petition was to be presented to Parliament by Mr. F. Jowett, M.P. for Bradford. The petition pressed most strongly upon the House of Commons the need of immediate action, urged the amplitude of the national wealth and its steady increase year by year, and insisted that we could afford to create Pensions out of our national revenue.

The constant factor, in this as in every stage of the agitation, was prayer. And every P.S.A. I addressed was solemnly invited to train all their unseen artillery on the forces that opposed.

Ireland moving. Ireland, which was to profit most, was least active of any of the four sections of the United Kingdom. But this winter there were signs of eager expectancy in the Irish people. Besides the Trade Union Congress meeting in Dublin, a huge demonstration was held in Belfast on November 13th addressed by Mr. Rogers, Mr. Roberts, M.P., and Mr. Grayson, M.P., and marked by enthusiastic and resolute purpose.

“Official inspiration.” We may not here overlook the intervention of an ally to whom we owe “John Bull’s Other Island.” Mr. Bernard Shaw came out in November with a very vigorous declaration in our favour. It was entirely free from those perplexing paradoxes which make the reader feel that the writer is laughing at him while pretending all the time to be intensely serious. It was straight, clear, plain, most forcible. It was elicited by an article in the *Westminster Gazette* of November 23rd, in which he detected “marks of official inspiration.” The article announced, “what we look for immediately is the best beginning that can be made with five or six millions: and if that sum is carefully expended, it should make a serious impression on the most urgent part of the problem. A beginning on these lines carries with it the consequence that the scheme, though non-contributory, shall not be universal. The State will not pay 5s. to all old people, regardless of means and character: and it must therefore select the deserving necessitous.”

Mr. Shaw replied in a brilliant letter published on the **Mr. G. B. Shaw.** 25th. He wrote:—

“Here is a huge accession of sound insurance business waiting for the friendly societies when Old Age Pensions come. But there must be no doubt that Pensions will inevitably come at 65. They must be as certain as death itself to secure the societies and give confidence to the insurers. That is why all nonsense about deserving cases and the like must be dropped, even by people who are too stupid to see its moral absurdity. If you come to that, we none of us deserve Pensions. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The murderer whom we condemn to penal servitude for life has his five shillings’ worth of food and lodging, and more to boot. For what extremity of undeservingness, pray, would our Pharisees deprive the worn-out labourers of as much?

“More fatal than either of them would be an attempt at a negative or timidly stingy policy. It is possible—it is even respectable, however obsolete and impracticable—to raise the banner of No Old Age Pensions, and go down with the old Whig flag nailed to the top-gallant. It is clever and feasible to raise the cry of Old Age Pensions at the Expense of the Foreigner through Tariff Reform. It is easy, as well as obviously expedient and honest, to raise the cry of Social Reform Purchased by Social Wealth, and to convert idlers’ incomes into labourers’ Pensions and grants in aid of the rates. But, believe me, to do what is suggested in your issue of Saturday is, at this time of day, to walk off the map of Europe.”

But while the whole machinery of agitation was working at full blast, with an enormous output of speeches, resolutions, memorials to Government, yet, as Mr. Rogers reported, “in all gatherings there was present the sense that the last word was uttered, the last argument put, the nation’s mind made up, and Government action must be the next step.”

CHAPTER XLV

NEW YEAR HOPES AND FEARS

The course clear.

The New Year dawned with a great glow of hope. It seemed bound to see Pensions actually enacted. The three last lines of circumvallation around our coveted objective had all, it appeared, been captured. The country had given overwhelming proof of its mind in the matter. The Commons had by resolution, deputation, repeated votes, second readings, declared their determined purpose. The Cabinet was pledged, seemingly beyond recall, to legislate in the New Year. With country, Commons and Cabinet all of one mind, the course seemed clear and the prospect radiant.

But there were shadows about.

There were rumours that the Cabinet was wavering.

Enter the German Fleet.

A new fact had emerged above the political horizon, and it was an ugly fact. Competition in naval armaments—that was the cloud that darkened our outlook. The German programme came out in November. It was taken by sensitive patriots as a challenge to our naval supremacy. The cry was immediately raised that millions must be spent in the enlargement of our Navy. The inference was as quickly drawn that what was to be spent upon our fleet must be withdrawn from social reform. Battleships were pitted against Pensions. In *Fellowship* for February I endeavoured to show that the antithesis was false. As the naval rivalry between Germany and Great Britain still continues, and as the competition between social reform and armaments threatens in one form or another to abide, what I wrote there may be reproduced here:—

A false conflict.

“Eminent and august persons are still engaged in the absorbing game of Pull Pensions, Pull Navy. No doubt there are loudly competing cries. But between the claims of a “supreme Navy” and of universal Pensions, no conflict is necessary. The case for Pensions has long been made out; it is unanswerable and need not be re-stated. The maintenance of a supreme Navy is, its advocates tell us, a matter of

life and death for the British Empire. But what is a matter of life and death for the British Empire must surely—if the law of self-preservation have any force—command the treasure of the British Empire by the hundred million; to talk about filching two or even three millions from the Old Folks in order to save the Empire from imminent ruin—is simple bathos. It is something like a millionaire picking an aged relative's pocket of half-a-crown to save himself from bankruptcy!

“If the British Empire is in the deadly peril of which we are told, then the course is clear. Let the Empire rise to the emergency with all its resources. One-half of the income of the United Kingdom belongs, say, to five millions; one-half to thirty-eight millions. In a matter of life or death for the Empire we must be ready, let us say, to tax down the five millions to the level of the thirty-eight millions. ‘The safety of the State is the supreme law.’ There is plenty of taxable wealth here for any nation on the brink of the abyss. To make the mortal peril of Empire the pretext not of revised taxation on a scale commensurate with the colossal issue at stake, but of stealing a paltry million or two set apart for the aged, is ludicrous inconsequence and cowardice, and worse!

“It is to say to the aged fathers and mothers of the nation: That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban—that is to say, Given—to the Fleet! It is no longer to suffer the nation to do aught for its aged ones. It is to make the Word of God of none effect through your naval tradition. It is challenging a Power more terrible than a million German navies. Are we really more afraid of the Kaiser than of God?”

There were rumours of dissension in the Cabinet. Ministers were said to be at sixes and sevens on the question of robbing Pensions to pay the Navy. It was rumoured that the First Lord of the Admiralty had threatened to resign if he was not given as many battleships as would absorb all the funds earmarked for the old folks.

Faithful dealing with the Government seemed necessary, and more than Apostolic “plainness of speech.” Mr. Rogers had already circularized the Cabinet, succinctly recapitulating the “fundamental principles” on which the nation had “made up its mind”—that Pensions must be universal, a civil right, non-contributory, without the income limit which penalized thrift, dissociated from Friendly Society and from Poor Law, and not available for aliens. Mr. Rogers concluded with the significant hint: “Any Party which gives to

What the peril
of Empire
would require.

Corban!

Admonishing
the Cabinet.

the nation this large and generous reform will cover itself and its fiscal methods with a wide and lasting honour, and it may well be that the Party which failed to do so would cover them with equal condemnation."

The New Era at hand.

I felt it my duty to send to the *Review of Reviews* a statement of the "prospects and politics of Pensions," which the Editor kindly published in the January number. As a survey of the situation, parts of it may be recalled here:—

"1908 promises to be a Great Year. Unless incalculable accident or inconceivable stupidity intervene, the new year is bound to see the enactment of Old Age Pensions. The Government has pledged itself beyond all power of withdrawal to legislate on the question in the approaching Session. It has both the voting power and the financial resources equal to the task. And even if it had not the will, it is faced with forces which make inaction or postponement all but impossible.

"We may confidently count on 1908 becoming famous for the first Old Age Pensions Act passed within the United Kingdom; and not for that fact only, but for the new era which it will inaugurate of large and wise expenditure on social ends. It will mark the serious beginning of the time when the British democracy will spend its money as freely to protect itself against the misery of indigent age, of underfed childhood, of unemployment, and of inhuman dwellings, as against the misery of invasion by a foreign foe. Social programmes begin this year to rank with naval programmes in the order of financial magnitude."

After recapitulating the promises of the Government, I referred to the amount "earmarked":—

"The two and a quarter millions would provide with 5s. a week only 173,000 pensioners, or about one-seventh of the number Lord Rothschild's Committee found to be unprovided for. A very much larger sum is expected to be supplied by the Government if any tolerable commencement is to be made this year. The question, 'Where's the money to come from?' can be, in the case of the Pensions programme, as it was in the case of the great Naval programme, left to the ingenuity of the responsible financial advisers of the Crown.

A really social democracy.

"If the Government abides faithful to its reiterated pledges, and introduces a large measure of reform, then indeed 1908 will be a great year for Liberalism. The Government will have convinced the working classes that it is in earnest about social reform; it will have gained an untold accession of strength for its conflict with the Lords, and it

will have covered itself with undying fame as the first Government of a really social democracy.

“ It is scarcely conceivable that so splendid an opportunity will be flung away. But the attempt, however difficult, to conceive our taking an opposite course to that which we intend often helps to confirm our original purpose. Ministers may be strengthened in their resolve to do justice to the aged by a glance at what would happen if they weakened or faltered or went back on their word. And there have been rumours that a sub-committee of the Cabinet, with Mr. McKenna in the chair, has been considering possibilities widely at variance from the definite pledges enumerated above. There are, moreover, vague impressions abroad that certain powerful financial interests, which work in darkness, are opposed to the readjustment of the national expenditure which would follow on a large measure of Old Age Pensions, and are exercising pressure of a kind that may not be seen in the open.

“ The whisper has gone about that there is a hankering after the Chaplin limit of 10s. a week of private income which would bar the receipt of a pension. Now, to set up such a limit would be (1) to stultify Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Government they spoke for, and the House of Commons, all of whom have most emphatically pronounced against any such discrimination; (2) to penalize thrift, giving a pension to the man who draws 9s. a week from his Trade Union or Friendly Society, and giving no pension to the man who draws 10s. a week; (3) to transform a civil right into a pauper dole and to degrade, as at present, the pauper recipient; and (4) to make necessary the setting up of costly machinery for the purpose of investigating the private resources of every applicant. The Central (Unemployed) Body for London, which spent (roughly) £25,000 of the ratepayers’ money mostly in order to ‘investigate’ applicants for work and only £45,000 in providing work, offers an instructive object lesson.

“ There are other considerations which must be faced if from any cause the Government fail to bring in a really large measure of Pensions this year. (1) The plea of inability to find the money will seriously discredit the present Free Trade basis of taxation. If under Free Trade a Government with an overwhelming majority in a time of unprecedentedly abundant imports and exports declares it cannot provide the means for a long-delayed reform of ‘ extreme urgency,’ that Government has done more to undermine Free Trade in the judgment of the working classes than all Mr. Chamberlain’s

Would Liberals flinch?

Was the Government backsliding?

What backsliding would mean.

'raging and tearing' agitation. (2) A mere apology or 'put-off' for a national system of Pensions would infallibly alienate the working classes who have hitherto supported the Government. The experience of Colne Valley would be repeated in any number of industrial constituencies. The working men have not forgotten that last year by remitting 3d. off the income tax on earned incomes, and postponing Pensions, Mr. Asquith set the additional comfort of the comfortable classes before the admittedly urgent needs of the aged poor. No excuse of naval programme, or of any other kind, would prevent the conviction gaining ground that a Liberal Government cares only for the middle classes, and persistently sacrifices to them the interests of the working classes.

Suicide!

"(3) For the Government to appeal to the country against the Lords with only a paltry show of Pensions would be something scarcely distinguishable from political suicide. For the nation may or may not have made up its mind about the Peers: it has beyond all manner of doubt or gainsaying made up its mind about Pensions.

**Would Whigs
be "dished"
again?**

"Any vacillation, or irresolution, or petty proposals on the subject this Session would put most of the trump cards of the game into the hand of the Opposition. The Disraelian precedent of 'dishing the Whigs' over the borough franchise has not passed out of the political memory, least of all of Disraeli's successors. Mr. Balfour may naturally prefer not to show his hand until the decisive appeal is made to the constituencies. But then if the Liberals had only a narrow and restricted Pension Act to present to the country, the opportunity given to a courageous Unionist leader would be all but irresistible. To 'go one better' than the Radicals, boldly to commit himself and his Party past recall to a universal system of Old Age Pensions, the money to be obtained by a heavy tariff, would solve for Mr. Balfour his most difficult problems.

**A splendid
chance for
Mr. Balfour.**

"It would unite both wings of his Party. The heavy tariff imposed to provide Pensions would not violate the Free Trade principles of the Duke of Devonshire and the like; it would be a 'tariff for revenue only'; while Tariff Reformers would be only too delighted to get a heavy tariff by any means. Disappointed and disgusted electors would feel they could vote for Mr. Balfour without renouncing Free Trade. And the 'Tory democracy' would have found at last a leader who dared to inaugurate huge social reforms. Meantime, perhaps most important of all for the true Conservative, the House of Lords would have been saved. The only question

would be: Has Mr. Balfour the courage for a great coup of this kind?

“ As yet, however, the cards are all in Liberal hands. By a comprehensive measure of Pensions they can fortify afresh their case for Free Trade, lessen Labour defections, strengthen their hold on the nation, and find the Peers an easy prey.

“ But in any case the aged must have their pensions.”

Advance proofs of this “ *Manifesto*,” as the Editor called it, were forwarded to members of the Cabinet, and were acknowledged with varying degrees of attention. From three came the bare official printed receipt: from three came letters “ with thanks ”: from two came assurances that they had read the paper, one “ with interest,” the other “ with very great interest.” Copies were also sent to the leaders of the Opposition, and I had reason to believe that Mr. Balfour gave the matter more than a passing notice.

It is a pleasure to include in a record of the Pensions movement this message from one of the leading philanthropists of the day, whose humane services to mankind in general are rendered only the more significant by the high official positions he has held in both hemispheres. The Viceroy of Ireland wrote:—

Lord Aberdeen.

“ I have to thank you sincerely for your letter of the 7th inst., and for your extremely interesting and forcible statement and appeal. Most heartily do I hope that your words may have a stimulating and enlightening influence.—
ABERDEEN.”

I.—AT LAST

CHAPTER XLVI

IN THE KING'S SPEECH

Keystone of the Arch.

The Session of Parliament which was to confirm our fears or to fulfil our hopes was opened in state by the King in person on January 29th. Business took me on that day to the Strand terminus of the Hampstead Tube. There I saw the first evening newspaper announcing the King's Speech. To purchase a copy and glance through the lengthy report of the Royal pronouncement was the work of a second.

It was there!

It was in the King's Speech at last—the official guarantee of the immediate enactment of Old Age Pensions.

It followed eleven paragraphs dealing with foreign and colonial affairs. It preceded the announcement of eleven separate Bills. Between these two elevens it was poised—the true keystone of the arch.

Money Bill.

From the Bills promised to "My Lords and Gentlemen," it was kept carefully apart. It was addressed exclusively to "Gentlemen of the House of Commons." It was in the paragraphs dealing solely with finance. It was going to be a money Bill pure and simple. The Lords were warned in advance that they were to have no finger in that pie.

The precaution on which we had insisted in framing our own Bill had been adopted by the Government. The actual words were:—

"Gentlemen of the House of Commons,—Estimates for the expenditure of the year will in due course be laid before you. In connection with the financial arrangement of the year, proposals will be brought forward for making better provision for old age, and legislation with that object will be submitted."

With thankful heart I cut out the memorable paragraph, and have carried it about with me ever since: a constant

reminder "that good shall fall at last"—though late—"at last to all."

In that paragraph His Majesty spoke the mind, not of a Ministry, or of a Party, but of a Nation.

The Prime Minister who was responsible for this official promise was not permitted to see its fulfilment. He died on April 22nd, 1908. It is not his name that will be associated with the law conferring Pensions. But to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman our movement, if I mistake not, owes one great advance. He definitely committed his Government to the principle of universal Pensions. I question whether without him we should have had an equally irrevocable emphasis on the universality of Pensions. He nailed that flag to the mast. Those who keep on working for the ideal of Pensions for all have the abiding satisfaction of knowing that it has been adopted as the legislative objective of the British Government, on the solemn assurance of its responsible head.

His death did not interrupt or postpone the plans of the Ministry. For he was succeeded in the office of Prime Minister by Henry Herbert Asquith.

By one of those coincidences which sparkle about our movement, the annual meeting of the Browning Settlement was held on the very day—April 9th—on which from audience of the King at Biarritz Mr. Asquith returned to town as Prime Minister.*

This fact naturally appealed to the imagination of the meeting, so the following telegram was sent:—"Browning Settlement, which had the honour to be inaugurated by you, and is headquarters of movement for Old Age Pensions which you will this year enact, desires at its thirteenth annual meeting to offer sincerest congratulations on your

What we owe
to "C.B."

* But what is there remarkable, it may be asked, in these two things happening on the same day? This: that the statesman, now chief Prime Minister in the Empire, was over a dozen years ago inaugurator of the Settlement: that in Browning Hall (November 20th, 1895) he delivered his inaugural address: that Browning Hall had since become the headquarters of the Old Age Pensions movement: and that the first great Act of Mr. Asquith's premiership was likely to be the Old Age Pensions Act, which he fathered as Chancellor of the Exchequer and passed into law as Premier. A delightful and sympathetic parody of "Love Among the Ruins" appeared in *Punch* (December 21st, 1895) under the heading of "Browning at Browning Hall," in which the stanza occurred:—

"Love of fellows pricks the hearts up of a few
Brave and true,
To make a 'Social Settlement,' called, I see,
After me!
Herbert Stead, the Worthy Warden, plies the task, with
Aid from Asquith."

attaining highest office in the State.—(Signed), ARNOLD PYE-SMITH, F. HERBERT STEAD.”

**Browning
Settlement and
Pensions.**

In his inaugural address, Mr. Asquith had said, “The sphere of Party politics is something quite outside and beyond the work of this Settlement.” As a “living illustration” of this fact and of the union of men of all Parties in the work of the Settlement, the meeting was presided over by that staunch Conservative, the ever genial ex-Lord Mayor, Sir William Treloar, while the chief speaker was the Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party, Mr. G. N. Barnes, M.P. References to the approach of Pensions were frequent. Mr. Barnes said, “What Browning Settlement has done to obtain Old Age Pensions, even if it had done nothing else, is sufficient to hand down its name to the gratitude of posterity.”

A yet more striking coincidence occurred in the fact that Mr. Asquith, inaugurator of the Browning Settlement, brought in the Budget to provide the Old Age Pensions which Browning Hall during more than nine years had led the country in demanding, on Browning’s birthday!

CHAPTER XLVII

THE OLD AGE PENSIONS BUDGET

It was a memorable scene. The House was crowded. It was one of those sittings—alas ! only too few in number—which impress the beholder with the real greatness of that historic Chamber. There was the feeling of an audience far larger than the seven or eight hundred persons within ear-shot of the speaker. There was a sense that the nation itself was listening : and listening to an accent of its destiny.

Mr. Asquith's speech was a wonderful achievement. He spoke for about two hours and a half. He had perforce to deal with a great array of figures. He used none of the purple patches of Asiatic oratory. Nor were there "funny stories" introduced obviously for the sake of the certain obsequious laughter: nor smart epigrams flung in to stab a fading interest to renewed zest. Yet he succeeded in making his hearers feel that they were undergoing no strain, and overcoming no difficulty, but simply experiencing a pleasure. He took them through all the maze of statistics as though it were a delightful promenade, with wide views and interesting monuments at every turn. *Lucidity*—that was the triumph of the speech. The voice never failed or wavered : never sank into the monotone that reveals and produces a sense of strain : varied naturally with the perpetual variation of topic : and remained at the last as it was from the first, a pleasure to listen to. Not till the speech was over did the listener become aware of the mental tension to which he had been insensibly wound up. In style and diction and delivery the utterance was worthy of the chief representative ruler of a free, intelligent, and above all, practical people.

From the purely financial point of view, the record unfolded was not below the manner of its unfolding. It recounted simply marvellous exploits in the reduction of debt. The National Debt had been reduced during the single financial

A triumph of lucidity.

A Marvel of Finance.

year just ended by no fewer than eighteen millions!—a reduction “wholly without precedent.” In the three years ending March, 1909, it would be reduced by nearly forty-seven millions: with a permanent saving of interest to the extent of very nearly one and a quarter millions annually. In the six years ending March, 1909, the total reduction would be about seventy-four millions and a half: and the National Debt would be brought back, notwithstanding the South African War, to the same figure as that at which it stood in 1889!

Colossal Increase.

There were other wonders narrated. The income tax, after being reduced from 1s. to 9d. in the pound on earned incomes, actually produced three-quarters of a million more than in the previous year! The offer of the lower rate of tax had increased the amount of income submitted. Instead of the average increase during the three preceding years of fourteen millions, there had been an increase of thirty-seven millions sterling!

The estimated surplus of one-third of a million had turned into a realised surplus of four and one-third millions.

For the year 1908-9, if the present rate of taxation were maintained, the estimated surplus would be close upon five millions (£4,900,000).

All this was admirable finance. Expansion of revenue and reduction of debt were most gratifying phenomena. But the human objective of all national finance, where, we asked ourselves, did it come in?

It came in under the use to be made of the prospective surplus.

We were soon face to face with “the figure of old age, still unprovided for except by casual and unorganized effort, or, by what is worse, invidious dependence upon Poor Law relief.” We had passed from the region of mere report to the region of definite legislative construction.

Pensions in Parliament.

But first we were given a summary survey of the Pensions movement—merely, of course, as it came within the official purview of Parliament. Mr. Asquith said:—

“I need not remind the Committee that this question in one shape or another has been before the country now for the best part of thirty years. The first schemes that were put forward proceeded on the footing either of compulsory or voluntary insurance, accompanied and fortified by State aid. The Royal Commission on the Aged Poor in 1895 reported adversely to all the proposals which had up to that time been made. There followed a series of inquiries into schemes for granting immediate pensions to the aged

and deserving poor. There was Lord Rothschild's committee, there was a Select Committee of this House, presided over by the right hon. gentleman the Member for Wimbledon, in 1899, and there was Sir Edward Hamilton's Departmental Committee of 1900, and again a Select Committee of this House in 1903. Much valuable information was accumulated and classified in the course of these inquiries, with the result, I think, that all the material facts may now be said to have been ascertained. But up to this moment nothing has been done : nothing at all."

There is something very delightful about the way in which Parliament affects not to know what is going on outside Parliament. Between, "there was Lord Rothschild's Committee" and "there was a Select Committee of this House," there is in the report of Mr. Asquith's speech no more than a comma: and yet in point of time and force that comma covers the most fruitful and dynamic fact of all. It covers or conceals the intervention of Mr. Charles Booth and the rally to his lead of the working classes of the country, which created the National Committee of Organized Labour. Royal Commissions and Parliamentary Committees sit—and hatch nothing: they rise and disappear. But the movement which was born between Lord Rothschild's Committee and Mr. Chaplin's Committee supplied the resolute purpose which had till then been lacking, and which was now—in the very legislation which Mr. Asquith was about to propose—proving itself decisive.

The Prime Minister then glanced at the precedents set by the laws of Denmark, New Zealand, New South Wales, and Victoria. He announced again that "His Majesty's present Government came into power and went through the last General Election entirely unpledged in regard to this matter." The ostrich-head of the Liberal Party being securely buried in the sand of non-committal, the rest of its colossal body must—officially—be supposed to be similarly sheltered! But the body knew better.

Mr. Asquith repeated his earlier declaration that he only promised to make a beginning, and to proceed tentatively and by stages.

After this preamble, he went on to define the limits of the scheme proposed by the Government.

It was to be placed "once for all outside both the machinery and the associations of our Poor Law system."

"All so-called contributory schemes must be ruled out." In supporting this contention, Mr. Asquith followed Mr. Booth's adroit use in his Birmingham speech (April 24th,

A comprehensive comma.

"Entirely unpledged."

The Government Scheme.

1899), of what Mr. Chamberlain, roused by our Conferences, had said two days previously in Parliament. Mr. Chamberlain had made "a lucid and forcible statement of the overwhelming objections" to any contributory scheme. As the Opposition had shown from the first a disposition to favour the contributory idea, Mr. Asquith was astute enough to spike their guns with Mr. Chamberlain's recantation before they had got well into action.

**The Minister
on the Master.**

The paragraph which follows sounds strangely on the lips of a man who had, with his late chief, declared himself in favour of universal Pensions:—

"The next is what is called the universal scheme, associated with the name of Mr. Charles Booth, and is also out of the range of practical politics. The actual working cost of such a scheme is problematical. No one can tell how many of the people legally entitled would fail to claim their pensions, nor is there any reason why that proportion should remain constant from time to time. The possible cost might vary, according as 70 or 65 was selected as the qualifying age, from £16,000,000 to something over £27,000,000—figures which are obviously prohibitive. It is, at any rate, certain that under such schemes Pensions would be claimed and received by those who had no right to them from any view of necessity or desert."

The reference to Mr. Booth struck one as painfully curt and meagre. Considering the part which Mr. Booth had played in making Pensions certain, we could only feel that Mr. Asquith had not displayed that generous recognition of public desert which we had been glad to associate with his name. Other Ministers and other Members were proud to acknowledge Mr. Booth's inestimable services to this movement. But the proper place for such an acknowledgement was on the lips, not of private Member, or Peer, or Primate, but of the Prime Minister himself, as he sketched the outlines of the Old Age Pensions Bill. The short shrift he dealt out to the universal Pension to which he himself was entirely pledged was only less surprising than his scant allusion to Mr. Booth.

**Adoption of
our principles.**

With complete satisfaction we heard Mr. Asquith next announce that the obligation to provide a pension should rest on the State and not on the local authorities; that the pension should be confined to British subjects who have resided ten or twenty years in the United Kingdom; and that "the less you go into character, short of actual conviction for crime, the better." The impossible character-test was doomed.

Then as to the amount of the pension, we were informed

that it had been "generally agreed in this country that 5s. a week or £13 a year should be the sum." "Generally agreed"; certainly, *now*: but not once. We remembered well how we of the National Committee had had to fight for the uniform 5s. against any number of competing figures, as well as against the 5s. or 7s. of Mr. Chaplin's Committee. "One person one pension" was our cry, and "one pension one value." It was good to find the contentions for which we had battled accepted now by the highest authority as "generally agreed."

As the Prime Minister proceeded, in estimating the probable cost, to conjecture that "through ignorance, inadvertence, and other causes a substantial proportion of persons legally entitled to pensions would not receive them," I registered a mental vow that if we could help it, this "substantial proportion" should be reduced to the most shadowy dimensions. Events verified that vow.

Soon we had the definite decisions of the Government on controverted points: "First the income limit apart from pension should be fixed at £26 a year, subject to reduction in the case of married couples living together from £52 to £39 a year. Secondly we think that the age limit should in the first instance be fixed at 70." Conviction for serious crime within the previous five years would disqualify.

Then followed an outline of the method of working: the payment through the Post Office: the Pension Authority a Committee of the County Council: the Pensions officer an Excise officer: the first pensions to be paid next New Year's Day.

The estimates which followed of the number of pensioners and of the annual charge upon the revenue are interesting monuments of the lack of exact knowledge, which we had deplored from the first, but which only actual experience could make good. The pensioners were expected not to exceed half-a-million, and the maximum annual cost was to fall below £6,000,000. But during the current financial year only £1,200,000 would be expended.

This last announcement came like a blow on the expectant heart. "At least two-and-a-quarter millions earmarked for Pensions"—that had been the promise for this year's Budget. And here was the intended performance! Not *one* million and a quarter! The Government which had endorsed universal Pensions, and had pledged itself repeatedly to spending at least two-and-a-quarter millions, has sunk to appropriating little over a million. Then in almost the next breath Mr. Asquith went on to say he was left with a balance

An estimate
to be falsified.

A heavy
disappoint-
ment.

still undisposed of amounting to about £3,700,000. This he proceeded to devote almost entirely to a reduction of the sugar duty by one farthing on the pound.

Sugar
cheapened or
paupers
pensioned ?

Taken by itself the cheapening of sugar was undoubtedly a good thing. Incidentally also it was a bold defiance of the enemies of Free Trade. But it cannot be taken by itself. For, as later events proved, the £3,400,000 of revenue thus gaily remitted would have provided pensions for all the poor old folks whom the Government was proposing to disqualify on the ground of their having received Poor Law relief since January 1st, 1908. The choice before the Government was *either* to include all paupers otherwise qualified, *or* to cheapen sugar by a farthing in the pound. The Government took the less noble alternative.

Why?

Had this choice been put before the working classes of the country, there is little doubt that while regarding the sugar tax as an unjust imposition, they would have decided to continue even this unjust tax rather than inflict on the aged pauper the added ignominy of deprivation. Re-imposition is another matter. But it could not have been the working classes whom the Government was considering in this unfortunate remission.

Why were
paupers
sacrificed ?

Was it, then, the great firms who use sugar as a raw material of their manufactures whom the Government wished to conciliate? Faced with the alternatives of pensions for two hundred thousand paupers and a sop to a few sugar lords, did the *Liberal* Government choose the latter course? It has been frequently declared that the farthing on sugar was sacrificed to win the Dundee bye-election. Were this charge to be proved, Mr. Churchill can scarcely be expected to thank his colleagues for connecting his return to Parliament with what they themselves have described as an unjust and cruel hardship to two hundred thousand of his aged fellow-countrymen.

The obsession
of Liberal
finance.

The remission on sugar was the practical culmination of the great Budget speech: and soon the feelings which had gathered force in the galleries found free vent in the lobbies. What impressed me first and most forcibly was the contrast between Ministerial promise and performance. The Government had barely gone half-way towards the minimum to which it had pledged itself. This was the three years' financial record of a *Liberal* Government with an unprecedented majority in the financial Chamber: payment of debt—forty-seven millions: payment of pensions—one and a-quarter million! *Liberal* finance had proved once more to be under

an obsession in favour of remission of taxation and repayment of debt : as though these things were the sole objects to which the increasing wealth of a nation were to be applied ! These were sentiments which I expressed as vigorously as I could to every Liberal I met. For overlooking, to some extent, in the smart of disappointment the importance of the commencement which had been made, may I be forgiven ! The criticism was just, though not complete. But it was remembered. Many weeks later, as I was talking to a friend on the Terrace of the House of Commons, a Member of the Cabinet came up, and being in a jocular mood, ejaculated to my friend : "Look here, Arthur," pointing to me, "here is the man who has come and filched out of the pocket of the Government eight millions a year for the old folks, and then goes down to Brwning Hall and calls the Government a set of condemned scoundrels."

Mr. Asquith's summary disposal of universal Pensions was The Premier brought to book not allowed to pass without comment, even on the day it was uttered. On the evening of the Budget Speech, Mr. Arthur Henderson read out in the House the authorized report of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman's and Mr. Asquith's speeches on November 20th, 1906, when the former stated that "any scheme must be universal in its application," and the latter "entirely endorsed" this view. The record naturally produced no small impression.

Through what may be termed the endosmosis of private conversation, the Labour Members gained the assurance that neither Mr. Asquith nor the Government he represented had gone back on the avowals of November 20th, 1906. They still believed in universal Pensions. They only shrank from an attempt to realise them under present financial conditions.

Four days after the Budget, the National Committee issued a circular expressing our pleasure at the Government's public adoption of every principle which we had contended for except that of universality—namely, rejection of all contributory schemes, entire separation from the Poor Law, no investigation into character, provision of Pensions from national not local sources—and showing that in making this exception the Government had contradicted itself. We pressed for immediate action to raise the income limit and to lower the age limit from 70 to 65. We also pointed out the breach of faith committed by the Government in having promised at least two and a-quarter millions and now proposing to spend less than one and a-quarter millions on Pensions.

There was another point in which the Government had

followed the example and the advice of the National Committee. The Government had deliberately embarked on an annual Pensions expenditure of seven or eight millions sterling without indicating "Where's the money to come from?" For this prudent procedure the Government was duly taken to task by the Opposition in debating the Budget resolution dealing with Old Age Pensions (May 27th), and was treated to the same sort of criticism as Members of the Government themselves had freely meted out to us when we had insisted on what was now their policy.

The first reading of the Bill took place on May 28th, and on June 2nd the text of the Bill was given to the public.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL

When a Prime Minister with a huge majority behind him shapes his Budget to give effect to a long-promised reform, and when a Bill embodying that reform has been brought in by a Chancellor of the Exchequer prepared to make it the chief measure of the session, we have evidently passed far beyond the region of beginnings. And after the Pensions movement has been launched into the mid-stream of Parliamentary progress, by the Budget of Mr. Asquith and the Bill of Mr. Lloyd-George, the narrative which has essayed to tell "*How Old Age Pensions began to be*" is obviously near its close. The story henceforth writes itself on the official records of the nation, in the concentrated glare of all the searchlights of modern publicity. There but remains for me to trace amid the fresh blaze of light the lines of influence which wrought in the comparative darkness of the earlier stages and which link together with the initial impulse the eventual achievement.

When the shock of the contrast between the professed creed and the proposed deed of the Government had lost its poignancy, the tendency grew general to dwell with complacency upon the substantial nature of the boon which the Government was preparing to bestow upon the aged. This happy mood was, in its turn, interrupted by the first appearance of the Bill in print. Serious dissatisfaction gathered at once about the wide range of the disqualifying clauses, and about the loophole afforded for administrative perversity. The most disquieting of the projected disqualifications was that contained in Clause 3—"Receipt of any such parochial or other relief as disqualifies for registration as a Parliamentary elector." "Or other relief." This phrasing seemed to open the door to all manner of exclusions. These perilous possibilities were exposed by Mr. George Barnes in his speech on the second reading of the Bill, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer promptly promised to obviate them, and did

Appearance of the Bill.

Loopholes for the Inquisition.

obviate them by re-drafting the clause. Then paragraph *b*, which disqualified a man who had been "brought into a position to apply for a pension through his own wilful act or misbehaviour" was in point-blank contradiction to the words of the Prime Minister in his Budget speech, "The less you go into the question of character short of actual conviction for crime, the better." The clause was an invitation to the very kind of inquisition which was hateful to the soul of the self-respecting citizen, and for which the people in all our meetings had declared their intense loathing. And unfortunately the proposed machinery of administration offered just the opening of which the Inquisitors of the Poor most readily avail themselves. In Clause 8 appeared the words: "The persons appointed to be members of a local Pension Committee need not be members of the Council by which they are appointed." The side door of co-optation is well known to members of the "Charity" Organisation Society. Councils which they could never enter by the front door of popular election, they ooze into by the indirect entrance and permeate with their policy. The combination of these three clauses made it possible for these interlopers, in veiled but direct opposition to the popular will, to set up in every Pension Committee in the realm their favourite inquisition, for the moral torture and pecuniary deprivation of the aged poor. The combination seemed to be too closely inter-adapted to be the work of chance. The suspicion naturally arose that the drafting of the measure had been entrusted to certain permanent officials the whole bent of whose mind is in the direction of the Charity Organisation Society policy. In the case of the Unemployed we have had a flagrant proof of the way in which these underlings take advantage of their vocation as draughtsmen to reverse even the declared policy of the Government whose paid servants they are. Happily in the case of the Old Age Pensions two of the legs of the Inquisitor's tripod were broken. The perilous vagueness of "other relief" was got rid of, as I have stated: and the "character-test" was altered to an industry test. The co-opting clause remains, but has not, in the absence of the other two, been productive of much harm. The purpose of the Government was, there is every reason to believe, entirely against the work of the clumsy or cunning draughtsmen, whose wording we had to undo. There were other blemishes by which, unfortunately, the Government meant to stand. But of these later.

The new Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The debate on the Second Reading of the Bill covered June 15th and 16th. The speech in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer led off suggested to many minds the impression of

a man whose education on the question was recent, whose acquaintance with it was mediated rather than direct, and who was feeling his way towards a maximum of agreement within financial limits supposed to be rigid. His smart remark that almost everyone on first approaching the subject favoured a contributory system, but on closer study found contributory schemes inadvisable and that therefore you could infer the tyro in the advocate of the contributory idea, had about it a touch of autobiographic sympathy. He announced his readiness to consider a sliding scale in place of the fixed income limit, and his intention to modify the character clause at least to the extent of accepting membership in a Friendly Society for a given number of years as ground of exemption from investigation into character.

An amendment, objecting to spending the taxpayers' money in giving subsidies to persons selected by arbitrary standards of age, income, and character was moved by Mr. Harold Cox in a speech that was as brilliant and incisive as it was unconvincing and ineffective. It amused rather than impressed the House. It supplied just the entertainment which that Assembly seems especially to relish—namely, the enumeration of a whole series of apparently unanswerable reasons for not doing what the House has made up its mind on practical grounds to do. The Englishman's distrust of mere logic takes the form of liking to have the logic which he means to disregard served "hot and strong." His practical mind has long seen how easy it is to advance 999 reasons for not doing the one thing which the thousandth reason makes imperative, and it touches his sense of humour to see a clever man playing with superlative brilliance the easy game of negative conclusions.

Lord Robert Cecil, who seconded, sounded the more serious note that we were throwing away to the aged the funds that might be needed in a life and death struggle for national existence.

The National Committee was represented in the first day's debate by Mr. Frederick Maddison. In a speech of characteristic vigour he warmly welcomed the Bill. He thus referred to the part taken by Mr. Charles Booth and his co-adjudors in bringing the question to the front. He said:—

"He had been associated with Mr. Charles Booth's Old Age Pension scheme for many years, and there was not a man in England who was entitled to more credit for making Old Age Pensions possible than Mr. Charles Booth. Mr. Booth was a Conservative in politics, and a cautious man belonging to the great trading class, who threw himself into

The Helot of
"Logic."

Tribute to
Mr. Booth by
Mr. Maddison,

this movement, and spent money and time and health in social research of the most disinterested kind, and, therefore, when they were on the eve of seeing a legislative effort successfully launched, they ought not to forget in this connection Mr. Charles Booth.

"Mr. Charles Booth stood for a number of principles, but this was the first Government that had ever attempted to embody a large number of those principles in a Bill. Mr. Booth stood for non-contribution, that the Pension should apply to men and women, and that it should be administered apart from the Poor Law: and those principles were in this Bill. He accepted the scheme whole-heartedly as a beginning, as applying to the necessitous, and as an experiment, and because he realised that they must take this scheme within the four corners of the financial resources which they were told existed."

—**and**
Mr. Burt.

On the second day, June 16th, the Rt. Hon. Thomas Burt spoke; and one noticed how the House listened to him with almost filial devotion and delight. In the course of his remarks he said:—

"He had taken a great interest in the subject of Old Age Pensions for a large number of years, and had been associated with the hon. member for Burnley, the hon. member for the Blackfriars Division of Glasgow, and the member for South-West Manchester in the National Committee appointed to deal with it, mainly on the lines laid down by Mr. Charles Booth. His friend the member for Burnley had paid a well-merited tribute to Mr. Charles Booth, who, with great disinterestedness, great ability and persistency, and at much cost of money, time, and health—he might almost say of life—had devoted himself for a long period to the promotion of this question of Old Age Pensions. Well, the subject, for the first time, was now practically before the House of Commons, introduced by a responsible Government. Now, he would like in a sentence or two to show, as far he could, some appreciation of the Government's action in bringing forward this measure. He would especially like to recognise the devotion of his right hon. friend the Prime Minister to this subject in not only introducing it in his Budget speech, but in also laying the foundation for it by wise and careful finance. Mr. Booth's scheme, it was pretty well known, was non-contributory. It was also universal, and was to begin at 65 years of age. It was, moreover, to be entirely dissociated from the administration of the Poor Law. Not all, but, he would say, the chief of these provisions were embodied in the Bill that was now before the House."

The quiet humour will be noticed with which Mr. Burt makes good Mr. Asquith's want of reference to Mr. Booth's services in the Pensions movement. Mr. Burt narrates Mr. Booth's exceptional work and distinctive principles, and then goes on to say, "Not all, but the chief of these provisions were embodied in the Bill that was now before the House." Following Mr. Burt's eulogy on the Prime Minister for bringing forward the measure, his words said in effect to Mr. Asquith: "You have done well in bringing Mr. Booth's scheme into partial realization. Your Bill is but the embodiment of his ideas. You have not fully succeeded in giving effect to the whole of his proposals. But you have done well in succeeding so far." So veiledly and kindly he put the real authorship of the measure before the House.

Setting the
Premier right.

A little later in the day the Chairman of the National Committee, Mr. George Barnes, applauded the incorporation in the Bill of those principles for which we had contended for ten years, and then proceeded to deal faithfully and effectively with the blemishes of the Bill.

The attitude of the Opposition struck me as that of men willing to wound and yet afraid to strike. Once more proof was afforded of the way in which the whole Unionist Party had looked to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain as its guide and conscience in respect of Old Age Pensions. In his absence, they had neither plan nor purpose in the matter, only a vague and irresolute sympathy.

Mr. Balfour, in his speech now and on a later occasion, gave the impression that he had practically no interest, either negative or positive, in the question; that it belonged to a region in which neither his head nor his heart was concerned; that he would therefore, as Leader of the Opposition, dutifully criticize the proposals of the Government from any or every standpoint, however mutually incompatible, from which he could launch a hostile dart. Had he only spent in a Settlement the time that he has devoted to a study of transcendental philosophies, or had he even known the aged poor as he knows golf, the generous heart of the man would have prescribed a very different attitude.

A leader out
of touch with
fact.

Mr. Asquith's speech, in summing up the debate, showed more than on previous occasions the humour and pathos, not to say passion, of great sympathy which are essential to great leadership. He was as kindly as he was caustic in his facetious references to Mr. Cox. He was conclusive in his exposure of Mr. Balfour's inconsequences. He was concessive on points of detail, he was adamantine in principle. Nothing, it was evident, would induce him to palter, or

Mr. Asquith's
vista of
reform.

postpone in dealing with this great demand for social justice. His last words were worthy of the occasion. He described the Bill as "a new departure leading along an almost unmeasured road of future social progress."

The wrecking amendment could only muster 29 members to support it in the division lobby. Against it trooped in seemingly endless procession no fewer than 417. In the minority (including tellers) were 2 Liberals (H. Cox and H. G. Montgomery) : the rest were Unionists. In the majority (including tellers) were **304** Liberals, **20** Liberal-Labour men, **28** Labour men, **23** Nationalists, **43** Unionists, and **1** Socialist. The opposition to the principle of the Bill having been thus effectually disposed of, the second reading was carried without a division.

Playwrights watching the play. On the first day of the debate Mr. Frederick Rogers was present in the gallery. Next day I was there too. Together, with scarcely a day's exception, we watched the course of the debates in the Lower House. Mr. George Barnes was kind enough to come up frequently and talk over with us prospective moves. Three of the principal officers of the National Committee were thus on the spot, ready to advise when any new development appeared. It was a curious experience. We watched with a feeling that the battle had long been won, that we were but witnessing the full-dress parade of victory. There was scarcely a new idea advanced during the whole course of the two eventful months. The only novelty was in the speakers and in the Parliamentary environment. The arguments on which we had ridden to battle during the ten years' campaign were brought out again for the use of unfamiliar riders. Old ghosts and bogeys which we had laid years ago were flaunted across the floor of the House as brand-new apparitions. Our thunderbolts were hurled by alien hands. The amusing thing in many of the speeches was the air of discovery with which were announced the platitudes of our agitation, worn with continual use. Mr. Rogers had taken the precaution to supply every Member of the House a few days in advance with printed matter setting forth in concise and handy form our main contentions, and he felt quite a paternal pride in recognising his facts and figures and arguments as they appeared and reappeared in the course of the debate.

Experts and the non-expert.

Other impressions may be put on record. We were struck by the lack of first-hand acquaintance which most Members displayed with the facts, even when they honestly intended to rectify them.

The Labour Members, of course, on both sides of the

House, were quite at home with the facts. They were experts on the situation. Of the middle-class Members, many on the Liberal benches and a few on the Unionist showed personal knowledge of old age in industry. But for the rest there was much more knowledge of Blue Books than of the living problem, of precedents than of persons, of laws elsewhere than of life at home. Only very few among the University-trained seemed to be able to put themselves in the position of the old folks. To the last the Unionist benches seemed to labour under the obsession that Pensions were a dole to dependents on a feudal estate rather than a dividend to shareholders in a national concern. From this obsession Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Mr. Goulding and one or two others showed themselves nobly free. No one could follow the debates without feeling that Mr. Chamberlain's heart was with the aged, or without honouring him for his genuine and intelligent desire to promote their welfare.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE BILL IN COMMITTEE

The five points in dispute. The Government lost no time in showing its determination to force Pensions through. On the day (June 17th) after the second reading, the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought in a resolution to limit the Committee stage to five days, Report to one day, and the third reading to one day. He plaintively recounted that already he had received notice of 178 amendments to the Bill, and he expected that number would be doubled before the House went into Committee. Evidently the prospect of as many amendments as there are days in the year appalled the Chancellor. He therefore advised the guillotine in advance. He pleaded that in principle the House was agreed: there were only five points of serious controversy. These were (1) the age-limit, (2) the question of sliding scale, (3) the abatement of pensions in the case of old couples living together, (4) the industry-test, and (5) the pauper disqualification. He would allow a day and a half for the discussion of (1), (2), and (3): and another day and a half to (4) and (5): and one day to the machinery of administration. These drastic restrictions were adopted by 306 votes against 102.

Sliding scale. The Committee stage began on June 23rd. The earlier hours were frittered away in what seemed to us in the gallery a great deal of meaningless chatter. Business began with an amendment proposing a sliding scale. Expressions of opinions from all parts of the House favoured the principle. It was accordingly, though not without protest from several Members, accepted by the Government. The scale adopted was that suggested by Mr. Goulding. The figures run into decimals when reduced to weekly income, but roughly they amount to giving the full 5s. a week to those who receive less than 8s. 1d. a week, 4s. to those who receive less than 9s. 1d. a week, 3s. a week to those who receive less than 10s. 1d. a week, 2s. to those who receive less than 11s. 1d.

a week, and 1s. to those who receive less than 12s. 1d. a week.

This was a step which we deplored. From the stand-point of those who desire universal Pensions, or even an early rise in the income limit, it is a backward step. For it smooths off the rough edge of the arbitrary limit of income. Had that remained abruptly at 10s., the actual hardship and injustice would have been so irritating as speedily to compel whatever Government was in power to raise the limit, if not to remove it. Then, too, the sliding scale impairs what should have been the irreducible sanctity of 5s. a week. Against these disadvantages the estimated annual increase in payment to the old folks of £100,000 is a scarcely appreciable advantage.

The second day (June 24th) opened with an avalanche of what seemed to us perfectly useless talk. It was aimed at introducing in Committee the contributory principle which had been rejected on the second reading. To stop this torrent of irrelevant gabble, the closure was at last invoked, and with success.

Labour at censor.

Then followed a dramatic scene. Mr. Barnes arose to speak to what proved a very fruitful amendment. He began, however, by expressing the resentment which every serious minded man must have felt in listening to "speeches of no importance on frivolous amendments." The Unionist opposition then became a seething mass of indescribable tumult. The Chair was noisily appealed to. Mr. Barnes was not ruled out of order. Only in deference to the Chairman's wishes, he withdrew the word "frivolous." But it was an impressive spectacle to see this working man trouncing noble lords and university men for their wanton waste of the nation's time. The appearance of their benches suggested to my mind a kennel of excited hounds leaping and barking while the kennelman laid about him with his whip. To their credit be it recorded that after Mr. Barnes's castigation they acquitted themselves in a less exceptionable manner. So calm and firm and authoritative was Mr. Barnes's manner that a shrewd onlooker spoke of hearing in his voice "the accents of a real Master of the House."

This was, however, no more than the prelude to a much greater moment in the life of the House. In the Bill stood the paragraph: "Provided that where any persons are living together in the same house, and any two or more of them are entitled to such a pension, the pension shall in each case be at the rate of *three shillings and ninepence* a week."

Penalizing wedded constancy.

Mr Barnes had risen to move that these words be struck

out. Notice had been given of no fewer than 22 amendments to the same effect, and these came from Members in all parts of the House. Mr. Barnes felt himself—and was—spokesman of the entire assembly: and, one may add, of the country also. The idea of putting a premium on separation, and of penalizing constancy, had aroused general revulsion and indignation. The nation simply could not stand the thought of Darby and Joan, after a lifetime of mutual devotion, having their Pension docked because they still resolved to live together. A great wave of human feeling swept over the House. Party for once was abolished. The House of Commons became not a cockpit of partizans, or even an assembly of "Honourable Members." It became a brotherhood of *men*, concerned as men with a great human problem. As I felt all that was involved—the happiness of thousands of homes, the recognition of the sanctity of the marriage tie, the righteous surge of national emotion, I could only pray—there in the gallery—with the silent intensity of the entire soul—that the Government would yield. There came to me the assurance that the request was granted. Then Mr. McKenna was put up to make answer for the Government. Every effluent force within me went out towards him with concentrated supplication that he might be moved to convey the message of surrender. If any suction of soul of which I was capable could have drawn forth the concession, it would have been produced. But my confident expectation was rebuffed by the fact. For the right honourable gentleman only reiterated the old arguments, that a couple required less than two separate persons, and that the Government could not find the extra money which the amendment demanded. I was disappointed. Rarely have the assurances given in prayer with such impressive certitude proved to be mistaken. I mentally registered this as an "instance to the contrary": as one of the unexplained things of the inner life: possibly a sign of some defect in the receiver of my spiritual Marconi system.

I soon saw that my conclusions were too precipitate. A great turmoil of emotion was going on on the benches below me. The most loyal partizans began to talk like mutineers. The chief Ministers came back to the House, and were surrounded with a buzz of private expostulation. Agonized Whips were seen with pallid lips telling the Prime Minister that the Government must yield or they would not be responsible for the consequences. Humanity had proved stronger than Party discipline. For a Power greater than humanity had been invoked and had responded. The Chancellor of

A great human moment.

Humanity conquers Party.

the Exchequer rose to announce the surrender of the Government. He had a difficult task to perform. He accomplished it with consummate astuteness. He would strike a bargain with the House, he said. If this demand for fresh expenditure were to be the last, he would grant it. Of course, Unionist and Labour leaders repudiated the suggested compact, but as the decisive majority was behind him, Mr. Lloyd-George had succeeded in turning what seemed a repulse into a tactical success. Nevertheless, a real victory had been won for the old folks: and it had been won at the instance of one who was at once the Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party and the Chairman of the National Pensions Committee. A glimpse had been given of what the House of Commons might become: the thinking and feeling organ, not of a Party, nor even of a nation, but of humanity.

Soon half-past seven o'clock arrived, when, according to the restrictive resolutions, discussion must cease not merely on Clause 1, which had been under debate, but also on Clause 2, which contained the age-limit. Then it was seen that the waste of precious hours in the previous day and in the earlier part of this day on wholly useless amendments had robbed the House and the nation of the opportunity of discussing the vital and highly controversial question of the age at which Pensions should be payable. It was exasperating to reflect that the untamed garrulity of a few who had but an infinitesimal fragment of the nation behind them should have prevented the whole of the People's Chamber from so much as trying to amend a provision closely affecting the life of the entire nation. To vote against the whole clause was the only resort open to the angry resentment of 124 Members. But in face of 341 affirmative votes the protest was unavailing.

The pauper disqualification under Clause 3 was next discussed. Here, again, the House promised to become less of a set of politicians in Party dockets and more of a gathering of human hearts. The plight of the aged pauper was obviously more thought of than smart Party repartee. True, the human way of talking about the old folks soon became a fashion. The burning phrases of real emotion passed into a new kind of cant. But in spite of the bargain struck by the Chancellor with his own followers, there were ominous indications that if the House were to have its own way the pauper disqualification was doomed. Why the British House of Commons should not have its own way on a matter of finance, and simply inform its financial

Age-limit
never
discussed.

The plea of
the pauper.

officers that they must by additional taxation find the extra money required, is one of those puzzles which a mere outsider who yet believes in the final authority of the Peoples' Chamber is completely at a loss to understand.

On the fourth day (June 29th), the claim of the pauper was again and at length considered. Mr. Bridgeman's amendment to exempt outdoor paupers from disqualification evoked a great amount of sympathy and support. It was vain for Mr. Lloyd-George to plead that the 210,000 thus added to the Pension roll would involve an annual increase of expenditure to the extent of £2,700,000: "and the money could not be found." Mr. Balfour made the unanswerable reply that if the Government retained the three millions and a half which would be sacrificed in remitting one-half of the sugar tax—and the Finance Bill was not yet passed—the money needed to pension the paupers could be found. Some concession was clearly demanded by the House. So the Chancellor of the Exchequer accepted an amendment standing in the name of Mr. Soares, and providing that the disqualification resulting from the receipt of Poor Law relief since January 1st, 1908, should cease on December, 1910. But this did not satisfy many Ministerialists: and Mr. Bridgeman's amendment was only negatived by 257 to 142 votes.

The rest of the sitting was spent in discussing the Government amendments specifying those forms of indirect relief which should not be considered as a disqualification. These were adopted, and the further amendments introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer passed under closure were also. So the third day in Committee ended with the passing of the third clause of the Bill.

The fourth day (June 30th), saw through Committee, after much discussion, the fourth clause dealing with the income of claimants, and without discussion the fifth clause prescribing that Pensions be paid weekly in advance, and on Friday, as also the sixth section, which makes the Pension inalienable.

The fifth day (July 1st) was occupied with the clauses laying down the administrative machinery. Mr. Barnes took strong exception to the presence of a co-opted element on the Pensions Committee. He expressed his apprehension that it might be composed of "faddists and people who arrogated to themselves all kinds of attributes which they did not possess." The clauses went through with slight alteration, the only important amendment accepted by the Government being that of Mr. Dickinson, which allowed

aggrieved claimants the right of appeal to the Local Government Board. So ended the Committee stage.

On July 6th the measure was re-committed in respect of the schedule containing the sliding scale, and in respect of two amendments to Clause 3; and on July 7th the Bill was considered on report.

CHAPTER L

THE FLAG ONCE MORE PROPHESYING

The Spirit of the wind.

However misunderstood or misrepresented by a small minority, the measure itself was moving on with great strides to certain victory. We could have no doubt of that. And what that victory meant for the national character sometimes came upon our minds with a sense of joyous awe. One night I specially remember. A crucial division had just been taken : and so far as arguments and votes and adoption of principles by the Government could secure it, the essential outlines of the great reform were sure of their place in the law of the land. The House passed to other business, and I was glad to escape into the open air. It was one of the many beautiful evenings which had added to the gladness of the summer-time. The western glow, not loud or glaring, but softened to an ethereal gentleness, lent something of its own colour and mystery to the bright new structures in Whitehall, to the delicate towers and traceries of the Houses of Parliament, and to the aged Abbey walls. The benediction of Heaven itself seemed to rest in loving radiance upon the scene of a great act of national repentance.

I turned for some refreshment into a temperance restaurant facing Palace Yard. As I sat and looked out of the window, there before me, from the flagstaff on the Victoria Tower, flapped and fluttered the Union Jack. I had seen the thing a thousand times before : but never as I saw it that night. The flag seemed as though it were alive. A fairly stiff breeze was blowing : and the spirit of the wind was in the flag, and the flag struggled and strove and thrilled as if it felt the strain and the triumph of the great endeavour going on beneath its folds. I could understand how, long ages ago, the Danish hosts, when confident of victory, saw flap upon their chieftain's banner the wings of his pictured bird. The national ensign streamed out before me, suggestive in every line and wave of the new breath of life which was blowing over the nation. It was the British flag once more.



THE FLAG THAT PROPHESIED.

Once the sign
of sin and
shame.

For years it had hung under a cloud. It had been stained with the crimes that are the shame and curse of Empire. The clustered crosses of the three great nations had been turned into a banner for the triple league of Mammon and Belial and Moloch. It had been prostituted to the profanest purposes of sordid greed: as a "commercial asset" of the first magnitude it had been mercilessly exploited by a polyglot crew whose only god was gold. It had been the trade-mark of orgiastic jingoism: much flaunting and flapping of its historic folds was a symptom of the delirium of war-fever. For it had been plunged in worse than the slime of financial intrigue, or bibulous "patriotism," or of Stygian statecraft. It had been soaked in blood—in innocent blood—in the blood of little children and defenceless women as well as of brave men fighting for their homes. In the eyes of the world—and in our own shamed eyes—it had stood for international brigandage, for "methods of barbarism," for the assassination of free republics, and for the substitution of reason by the sword. For years the flag had been a symbol of national sin and national dishonour.

Now hallowed
and purified.

Now it was again a sacred flag. It had been purified in the baptism of a national repentance. It was the same flag which had in the old days "prophesied salvation to the slave." It was again the flag of freedom, prophesying salvation not merely to the African slave, but to the thralls of adverse circumstances at home, to the prisoners of poverty, to the victims of "age and want." Once more it stood for justice and humanity and mercy. Once more it streamed at the van of human progress. Beneath its strenuous undulations wrought and fought the emancipators and ameliorators of mankind. Even now it was speaking freedom to half-a-million British subjects—freedom from starvation, degradation and shame. And so speaking, it prophesied of greater victories to come: of hunger vanquished, of unemployment ended, of poverty abolished. It fluttered and thrilled as with the joy of the new national purpose—new yet altogether true to the noblest traditions of old. I too thrilled to feel that England was herself again. She had flung off the years of braggart greed and shame; she moved, as in the ancient days, God's banner-bearer in the long march towards the perfect goal.

Sight of the symbol became sacrament of the soul, as one bowed in the fellowship of national penitence and shared in the awful joy of national forgiveness.

One's very frame flushed hot and then grew chill, to glow again, with thanks too deep for words.

What the flag
foretold.

CHAPTER LI

THE THIRD READING

The debate on the Third Reading of the Bill took place Trenchant criticisms. on July 9th. An amendment involving its rejection was moved by Mr. Bowles and seconded by Sir H. Craik. The Opposition expressed again its approval of the policy of Pensions in general, and indicated its preference for a contributory scheme. The logical dilemma was frequently put, that Pensions must be either contributory or universal. As the Pensions proposed by Government were neither, critics of the Bill had an easy and congenial task in exposing the anomaly and absurdity of the illogical compromises to which the Government had been driven. Mr. Bowles, for example, said that there was not a single Member of the Treasury Bench could pass the industry test laid down by the Bill. Mr. Philip Snowden declared that even the Founder of the Christian faith would have been disqualified under this obnoxious clause. There was a yet more interesting and gratifying feature in the criticisms advanced. One of the strongest objections brought against the Bill was that it would result in extending inquisition of the character associated with the Charity Organisation Society throughout the country. The notable thing was that this charge was advanced, not by the extreme advocates of social change, but by the Conservative Opposition. Its chief exponent was none other than Mr. Long, the author of the Unemployed Workmen's Act, which has probably developed all over the kingdom more "investigation" of the type evolved by the Charity Organisation Society than any other measure passed in recent times. It was significant of the national unanimity on this subject that Ministers joined with leaders of the Opposition in repudiating all desire to extend the Charity Organisation Society system. The Charity Inquisition repudiated.

Mr. Masterman, in a speech the ability of which was universally recognised, immensely strengthened the position of the Government by renouncing any endeavour to defend the indefensible compromises and makeshifts of this A frank confession.

admittedly incomplete measure. The later endorsement of his speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer lends the greater significance to Mr. Masterman's utterances. His words therefore may be quoted :—

“ It would be impossible for me to declare that I prefer a partial to your universal scheme of Old Age Pensions. I know only one argument against a universal scheme of Old Age Pensions, and that is—the lowest estimate of the cost would be 25 millions, and that the cost, even if we make all the allowances which the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Long) and myself desire in connection with the Poor Law, must amount to something like 16 or 17 millions. By excluding all alternatives, we are driven to establish certain limitations, which we acknowledge are illogical, against which strong batteries of reason can be advanced, and on the border lines of which anomalies are left; but we only declare, laying all our cards upon the table, and acknowledging these anomalies and limitations, that it is better we should go forward with the money at our disposal than that we should do nothing at all.”

Similarly Sir J. Dickson-Poynder admitted that the Bill was full of imperfections and inequalities, and expressed the hope that before many years were over the finances of the country might permit the reduction of the pensionable age to 65.

Three voices of Labour. The position of Labour was again clearly defined. Mr. Fenwick spoke on behalf of the Liberal-Labour Members, when he offered the Government an expression of his free, full, and whole-hearted appreciation of the step which they had taken, although he fully recognised that the measure was both imperfect and incomplete. The mind of the new Labour was voiced by Mr. Crooks, who asked the House to accept the Bill as an instalment, with which, however, they were not going to rest content. Mr. Snowden expressed this determination in terms that the Chancellor of the Exchequer later described as marked by “ acrid ferocity.”

The master of indecision. Mr. Balfour's attitude was as vague and impalpable as ever. He heartily sympathised with the objects of the Bill; he agreed that some form of pension was desirable; he would like all the investigations into industry and income to be avoided, and to be able to give a pension as a matter of course, “ or have what I should much prefer, some contributory scheme.” At the same time, when challenged by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who declared that Mr. Balfour had never once told the House what was his idea, Mr. Balfour replied, “ We have absolutely not sufficient evidence before us as to how

contributory schemes have worked elsewhere. Sufficient time has not elapsed to see the ripe development of the German scheme." These frank admissions of indecision, especially when viewed in the light of his record during the last ten years, make abundantly evident that, so far from having at any time in his responsible career seriously meditated the enactment of Pensions, Mr. Balfour had not even taken the preliminary step of formulating to his own mind the principle on which legislation should proceed. To the last he remained sympathetic, nebulous, undecided, unwilling to accept any responsibility. One positive good his speech contained. He said, "This is the Bill as it must go to a House where it is impossible, even if the Government desired to allow it, to make any change which would cast a charge upon the taxpayers." For this behest to his obsequious Peers, due gratitude was expressed, perhaps with a touch of irony, by the Government.

Mr. Lloyd-George, in closing the case for the Government, replied to the charge of stifling discussion with an air of the most engaging innocence. Every controversial point, he said, had been discussed—except the age-limit. As this was the most vital, and from the standpoint of the Government the most dangerous, point of all, its suppression could hardly be regarded as an unimportant exception. Mr. George put on record a definite pledge which reads somewhat strangely in the light of 1909. He stated twice over, with an emphasis deepened by the contradiction of Mr. Snowden, "we are pledged to deal with the pauper next year."

At 10.30 the closure fell, and the final division was taken. The long procession from the lobbies began. Only a few minutes had elapsed when from beyond the Speaker's chair, outside the walls of the Chamber, there arose a great tumult of merriment. Wave after wave of multitudinous laughter broke on the ears of the astonished hearers within the House. Through the opening on the Speaker's right, the gallery could gain a glimpse of the brightly-lit region beyond. And there I saw the Prime Minister in a fit of uncontrollable merriment, laughing and swaying and bending almost double with the exuberance of his mirth. From the place in which he stood, but from persons not visible to me, came sounds of equally uproarious hilarity. I wondered at the reason of this remarkable demonstration. I felt it did one good to see the Prime Minister so happy, as one of the greatest triumphs of his reign was being slowly assured of accomplishment. It was another touch added to the many that had appeared in the course of this debate, which positively endeared Mr.

A solemn pledge.

Mysterious merriment.

Asquith to the heart of the onlooker. It is human to feel kindly towards the man who laughs heartily and without malice.

The mystery solved.

The surge of laughter rose and fell and ever and again burst into shouts of glee. Eventually the crowd of Members had returned to their places. The Whips advanced to the table. The Ministerial Whips made their amusing little "bob" to the Speaker, and announced the figures: for the amendment, TEN. Then the mirth which had been heard afar now broke out in the Chamber itself. Again and again the House rocked with laughter. Such mountains of portentous rhetoric and argument and menace had yielded at last only this ridiculous mouse. The voice of the Whip announcing the figures against the amendment was drowned by the Babel of mirth. Only when the laughter passed, and the figures were repeated, did we know that 315 votes had been cast against the amendment and for the Bill. The humour which had expressed itself so uproariously was entirely good humour. The opposition to the Bill was shown to be of such meticulous weakness that the majority could only laugh goodheartedly. The names of the valiant ten who dared to set themselves against the tide of popular purpose in the House and in the nation ought to be recorded here, with their constituencies:—

Sir Frederick George Banbury (City of London); Hon. Michael Hugh Hicks Beach (Tewkesbury Division of Gloucester); Samuel Henry Butcher (Cambridge University); Lord Robert Cecil (East Marylebone); Harold Cox (Preston); Sir Philip Magnus (London University); Viscount Morpeth (South Birmingham); John Frederick Peel Rawlinson, K.C. (Cambridge University); Right Hon. John G. Talbot (Oxford University); Hon. Lionel Walrond (Tiverton Division of Devon). Tellers: G. Stewart Bowles (Norwood Division of Lambeth); Sir Henry Craik, K.C.B. (Glasgow and Aberdeen University).

It will be noticed that one-half of the number (five) sit for Universities. If ever the question is raised again of the representation of the Universities in Parliament, this vote on Pensions will be remembered. Of the rest, three represent metropolitan constituencies, the City of London, East Marylebone, Norwood; and two rural divisions, Tewkesbury and Tiverton. In 1904 Viscount St. Aldwyn, while still Sir Michael Hicks Beach, had asked, Did any of the supporters of Pensions believe it was possible for an Old Age Pension scheme to become law? In this division his son had got a conclusive answer.

Ten against 315.

In the majority (including tellers) were **217** Liberals, **47** Nationalists, **30** Labour men, **11** Liberal-Labour men, and **12** Unionists.

The Third Reading was then put and carried.

CHAPTER LII

THE BILL IN THE LORDS

Next day (July 10th) the House of Lords, on the motion of Lord Denman, read the Old Age Pensions Bill for the first time. What would they do with it? That was the question widely though not very anxiously discussed. The pitiless way in which the Peers had rejected or turned inside out Bills passed by the Liberal majority in the Lower House might have roused some apprehensions. But the national unanimity in support of Pensions made it extremely unlikely that any Chamber with the instinct of self-preservation at all developed, would court a collision with the popular will on a humanitarian reform of this magnitude.

The home of lost causes. The Bill came up for Second Reading on the 20th. It was expounded in a sensible and convincing speech by Lord Wolverhampton. The Earl of Wemyss moved as an amendment that, "Pending the report of the Royal Commission now inquiring into the principles of the existing Poor Law, it would be unwise to enter upon the consideration of a Bill establishing the far-reaching principle of State Old Age Pensions." He committed himself to this extraordinary assertion: "All those who have given their lives to the care of the poor, and are interested in thrift and other societies, are all hostile to this Bill as it at present stands." What a delightfully naïve confession of an ignorance that is truly abysmal! His speech was also notable for the publicity it gave to a circular issued by the Charity Organisation Society. Indignantly rejected by the Labour world, abhorred by electors, repudiated by leaders on both sides of the House of Commons, the Charity Organisation Society finds a sympathetic spokesman in the Earl of Wemyss as he is about to be defeated in the House of Lords. This was his quotation: "Neither the Bill, nor anything like the Bill, has ever been demanded by or received the sanction of the electors. To delay the Bill can do no serious injury to the country, and will enable the nation to consider calmly the

"A social revolution!"

policy of a measure which, for good or bad, produces a social revolution." That, said his lordship, is an accurate description of the Bill. Lord Cromer referred in menacing terms to the danger of absorbing in the subsidy of age the funds that might be needed to maintain our national existence. He said he did not think he had ever come across so reckless a financial scheme as that contained in the Bill, the passing of which, he said, would be the inauguration of a financial revolution. As in the Lower House the unique services rendered by Mr. Charles Booth to the movement were fully recognised—not, however, by the spokesman of the Government.

"A financial revolution!"

As in the Commons the tribute of organized Labour was paid by its most venerated chief, the Right Hon. Thomas Burt, so in the House of Lords the tribute of organized religion was paid by none other than the Archbishop of Canterbury. His Grace declared that after long and tiresome discussion the time for action had arrived. With a prescient insight into the pregnant nature of the change proposed, His Grace declared that it was the first step in a "long and toilsome journey." He believed the results would conduce in the highest degree to the common good of the English people. He took the opportunity to say, "There is one whose name has, I think, had too scanty justice done to it in the course of the debates on this Bill—I refer to Mr. Charles Booth. Beyond all question Mr. Charles Booth stands at the head of those who have investigated problems of this kind, and foremost of all at the head of those who have investigated this particular question. Some fifteen years have passed since Mr. Charles Booth published his great work—I can call it nothing less—upon 'The Condition of the Aged Poor.' The five hundred pages or so of that book, containing so many facts and figures, set forth so impartially, in a manner so intelligible and of course so readable that no book of the same dimensions written upon any subject is comparable to it." It will be remembered that the late Archbishop—Dr. Temple—had promised that if ever a measure embodying Mr. Booth's scheme came before the Peers, he would speak for it and vote for it. Dr. Davidson nobly discharged the duties which formed part of the legacy of his illustrious predecessor.

The Primate's tribute.

Lord Rosebery bore significant witness to the stupendous nature of the step about to be taken by the nation. He said: "Speaking from the bottom of my heart I believe this is the most important Bill, by a long way, that has ever been submitted to the House of Lords during the

Lord Rosebery's awe.

forty years that I have sat in it. I view its consequences as so great, so mystic, so incalculable, so largely affecting the whole scope and fabric of our Empire itself, that I rank it as a measure far more vitally important than even the great Reform Bills which have come before this House." With, however, the paralysis of purpose which seems of late years to have rendered his vast powers abortive, Lord Rosebery took up a tentative and somewhat deprecatory attitude. He would advise the House not to reject the Bill; he would not object to its alleged Socialism; some such method was needed; but he wanted to be reassured on many points, notably as to the danger which might accrue to Free Trade, and still more to national defence. He implored the Government to assure us that in furthering and not opposing this boon which they offered to the old of the United Kingdom, they were not dealing a blow at the Empire which may be almost mortal.

How Friendly Societies stood.

In the course of the debate, the attitude of the Friendly Societies, which has been passed under review in earlier pages, was eagerly canvassed. The Earl of Wemyss maintained that the majority of the Friendly Societies were opposed to the Bill. The Marquis of Ripon said he believed that that was a perfectly correct statement so far as the Societies were concerned, but he believed on the other hand that the large majority of the total membership of these Societies were favourable to the Bill. He could not doubt it. So the Peers were put in possession of a fact which had early been impressed upon us, that, while the officials and heads of the Friendly Societies might be, from the traditions of their caste, unfavourable to Pensions, the rank and file of the Friendly Societies were wholly in support of our contentions.

"Contents" of both parties.

When the division took place, there were 123 "Contents" and 16 "not-Contents"—a majority for the Bill of 107. This overwhelming majority in the House of Lords bore witness to the national unanimity. The majority was composed of adherents of both Parties. It included the noted names of Lord Cromer, Lord Curzon of Kedleston, and Lord Tennyson. The Episcopal Bench was represented in the division by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Ripon, the Bishop of Southwark, and the Bishop of Wakefield. Out of the twenty-six Bishops and Archbishops, only four registered their vote—the noble lead given by two successive Archbishops of Canterbury, to say nothing of the claims of the aged poor, ought to have ensured a heavier episcopal vote. Even though the result was a foregone

conclusion, the Church of England would have been better served had more than a sixth in the Episcopal Bench been found among the "Contents." Even in the House of Lords the "not-Contents" were only six more than the famous ten who opposed the third reading in the House of Commons. The names of the "Not-Contents" should be put on record : —The Duke of Northumberland, the Marquis of Abercorn, Earl Amhurst, the Earl of Carnwarth, the Earl of Hardwicke, the Earl of Marr, Lord Avebury, Lord Bellhaven and Stenton, Lord Fingall, Lord Forester, Lord Mowbray, Lord Muskerry, Lord Newton (teller), Lord Stanmore, Lord Wemyss (teller), Lord Zouche of Haryngworth.

16
Not-Contents.

CHAPTER LIII

THE TRIUMPH OF PENSIONS

**The Peers
unfriendly.**

The Peers had consented to read the Bill a second time, but they did not disguise the fact that they did not like the Bill. If it had not been a Money Bill, it would scarcely have escaped destruction at their hands. Their unfriendly feeling revealed itself unmistakably when the House went into Committee on the measure on the 28th of July. If they could not kill this snake of revolution, as they regarded it, they would scotch it. The whole debate was ominous of the new issues and the altered line of battle which Pensions involved. The great innovation itself seemed to raise in their lordships' breasts a desire for even further innovations. By way of prelude, Lord Rosebery announced that if he moved the amendment most to his mind, he should have moved that the Bill be made the subject of a referendum to the country at large, because, he added, "we know from the Prime Minister that it was no part of the programme on which the Government consulted the country at the last election." This was an effective piece of repartee to Mr. Asquith's solemn declaration that the Government had accepted office and passed through the General Election "entirely unpledged" on the question. Lord Rosebery went on to explain with a solemnity that was almost jocose that not even Old Age Pensions could justify the Lords revolutionizing the British constitution. He said he reflected that "the referendum was a new measure in this country, that there was no machinery to carry it out, and that so great an innovation on our constitutional practice should not be introduced in an indirect manner from the House of Lords." To forestall one revolution by another, and counter-revolution, evidently savoured too much of the *coup d'etat*. In the report of his speech there seems an air of pompous make-believe, for Lord Rosebery could scarcely have lived in such a fool's paradise as not to know that the mind of the nation was made up about Pensions. His utterance was symptomatic of the general uneasiness and apprehension with which his order regarded the measure. But

**Rosebery the
Irresolute.**

the Hamlet of politics, instinctively opposed to the pronounced, the definite and the decisive, could not commit himself to any determined opposition. He could not even approve of the amendment of which Lord Cromer had given notice, to amend Clause 1 by limiting the operation of the Bill to December 31st, 1915. He viewed it with some sympathy, but he argued that such a limitation was unnecessary. Nevertheless, he added, "It is quite easy to imagine a position of affairs when the country will find itself unequal to the task of national defence, and may say that, great as this scheme of benevolence was, we were not able to afford it, and while respecting existing beneficiaries, we were obliged to retrace our steps." But he shrank from all serious opposition. He merely sighed and submitted. In his own words: "I have delivered my soul, and have washed my hands free, so far as I can, from any responsibility for this vast measure of policy."

The House having gone into Committee, the Lord Chancellor gave definite warning that many of the amendments, notably that of Lord Cromer, would be regarded as an infringement of the privileges of the Commons. But in sharp and characteristic contrast with the indecisiveness of Lord Rosebery came the speech of the great Pro-Consul, resolute and decisive as ever. Lord Cromer was apparently resolved that if he could not kill the Bill outright, he would ensure that it only lived for seven years. With the most engaging frankness, he declared that the amendment was not conceived in any spirit of hostility to the Bill. It was in no sense what was called a wrecking amendment. It did not mean that the system of granting Old Age Pensions would cease in 1915: far from it. All that the amendment provided was that at some time prior to the close of 1915 the subject must come again before Parliament, with a view to the introduction of a new and probably more complete system based on the experience which by that time would have been gained. This disavowal of hostility to the measure which he was proposing to destroy at the end of a term of years was somewhat of a paradox, and his general argument might have disarmed suspicion had it not been for the positions that he took up in the debate on the Second Reading of the Bill. There was no doubt at all as to the desire to prevent the Bill crippling the nation in a great emergency of foreign conflict.

A lethal amendment.

Against the warnings of the Liberal Peers that the Commons would result in an interference with their privileges Lord Lansdowne retorted that the rights of the Lords must not be

Where were
the Bishops?

sacrificed to the privileges of the Commons. He advised the Peers to pass their amendment and leave with the Commons the responsibility of rejection. Lord Cromer's amendment was accordingly passed by 77 votes against 45 : and the Peers' hostility to the measure stood before the country entirely disrobed, with scarcely a fig-leaf to hide its shame. I regret to record that in this hostile demonstration the official exponents of organised religion participated. Two Bishops, Lichfield and Peterborough, voted with Lord Cromer, and only one, the Bishop of Bangor, voted against. The Church of England was not on this occasion either adequately or worthily represented by its episcopal chiefs. It would have been a sad satire on official Christianity if the boon so nearly won by the aged had been after seven years torn from their trembling grasp, with the help of Anglican Bishops. As though to soften the edge of the limitation just carried, Lord Cromer moved and the Peers passed the consequential amendment that any person who was in receipt of a pension on December 31st, 1915, should not be deprived of it by reason of the expiry of the Act. Other amendments followed, most of them marked by similar unfriendliness to the principle of the Bill, some of them withdrawn, others carried in the teeth of the protests of the Government, who declared that they entrenched on the privileges of the Lower House. The only real importance they possessed was their challenge to the financial authority of the Commons, and they may most fitly be dealt with as they reappear in the Lower House. Eventually, the Bill, thus docked and distorted, went through Committee the same evening, was reported on the next day, July 29th, and passed the Third Reading on July 30th.

An ill-advised
step.

Whatever induced the House of Peers, just on the eve of a great struggle with the Commons, to put itself so wholly and plainly and indefensibly in the wrong is hard to discover. Possibly the impunity with which the Lords had recently destroyed measure after measure which had come up to them from below had engendered a certain recklessness of arrogance. More probably they were impelled by the instinctive apprehension that here was the first of a great series of financial measures in which the supremacy of the House of Commons would be recovered and might be made absolute, and their lordships tried to act on the maxim, *Obsta principiis*. It was unfortunate for them that the beginnings they strove to thwart were the beginnings of so popular a reform as Old Age Pensions.

The Lords a
laughing-
stock.

The first rejoinder from the People's House threw the world into one loud, long peal of laughter against the Peers. Mr.

Will Crooks solemnly gave notice that on an early day he proposed to move, "That having regard to the fact that this House recently voted £50,000 to Lord Cromer, it is of opinion that he does not stand in need of a Government pension of £900 per annum, and that it should cease on and after January 1st, 1915." The laughter and cheers that convulsed the House were reverberated and reproduced wherever the English Press was read. The humour of the retort amused everybody. But there was more than humour in it. In this, as in other matters, Mr. Crooks was an expression of the new temper of the nation. The pension of a possible pauper is henceforth felt to be as sacred as the pension of an actual peer. Nay, to rob the possible pauper of his pension is regarded as a crime, to deprive a wealthy peer of his pension is regarded as an excellent joke. Mr. Crooks' witticism was also a grim reminder that the absolute power of giving or withholding Pensions, whether in the case of either lord or labourer, lay in the hands of the Commons, some of the greatest ornaments of the House of Lords being beneficiaries of the bounty of the House of Commons; and the Commons could, if too shamelessly opposed by the Upper House, show its resentment by stopping the pay of the pensioned peers.

Warning to
grand
Pensioners.

Happily, the Lower House had more direct and less sinister ways of securing its will. No sooner did the Bill as amended by the Peers come up for consideration in the House of Commons on July 31st, than the Speaker raised the historic cry of "Privilege!" On Lord Cromer's amendments to Clause 1, limiting the operation of the Bill to the 31st of December, 1915, he said, "They are in my opinion what are called 'privilege amendments,' and I say so on the ground that they vary the grant of Old Age Pensions as determined by this House." Promptly the resolution was carried "That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendments." With Viscount Midleton's amendment to Clause 2, specifying the manner in which the age of the applicant should be verified, the House did also disagree. Viscount St. Aldwyn's amendment to Clause 3, proposing to break the pauper's hope and remove the stipulation that his exclusion from the right to a pension should cease on the 31st day of December, 1910, brought up the Speaker, who declared "This is also a 'privilege amendment'; the effect might be to vary the period of disqualification." Forthwith the House did disagree with the said amendment. On Lord Saltoun's amended amendment, providing that disqualification for ten years on account of imprisonment should be incurred only

"Privilege!
Privilege!"

No quarter for
the Peers'
amendments.

when the term of imprisonment exceeded a month, the Speaker said, "I am of opinion that this is a privilege amendment. It extends very largely the benefits of the Bill . . . it adds to the number and it varies the charge. . . . It is, however, always open to the House not to insist on its privileges, if it desires to accept the amendment." On the Chancellor of the Exchequer moving that this House doth disagree with the said amendment, Mr. Balfour asked, were there not countless precedents for the House of Commons waiving its privileges and accepting amendments from the Lords, which technically violate its privileges? The Speaker replied, "I think almost every year, certainly very frequently, this House does not insist upon its privileges. It accepts amendments, and in sending a message to the other House the statement is made that this House does not insist upon its privileges."* On this motion a division was taken. 145 Members voted to disagree, and 33 voted for the amendment; majority against, 112. The amendment of Viscount Middleton constituting the City of London and the metropolitan boroughs as Pension authorities under the Act was also marked by the Speaker as an infringement of the privileges of the Commons. "It was an alteration of the constitution of the body appointed by the House to carry out the Act, and any such alteration meant an alteration in the authority for expending the money granted." On Viscount St. Aldwyn's amendment to Clause 4, requiring that in calculating the means of an applicant inquiry should be made into the question whether he had invested his capital in such a way "as to obtain the largest advantage that could reasonably be obtained from it," which had been described in the House of Peers as open to objection on the ground of privilege, the Speaker said, "It would be the doctrine of privilege run mad, were we to insist on this as being a breach of privilege." The Chancellor of the Exchequer urged that this amendment directed a man to invest his money where it would bring in the most return, and therefore not in Government securities. The House of Commons accordingly disagreed with it. These were the principal points of difference between the two Houses. Some amendments were rejected, and other accepted, as raising questions merely of drafting or of later regulations. When all the Lords' amendments had been disposed of, the usual committee was appointed to inform the Lords of the decisions of the Commons.

* Obviously, therefore, the House, in the very act of not insisting on its privileges, asserted them.

The attitude of the Commons on this measure and on the other measures which the Lords had mutilated, was very striking. In respect of the other measures, the House of Commons had eaten the leek with a wry face and mortified air. In respect of Pensions the Commons were confident, resolute, defiant.

The same day the House of Lords considered the message from the House of Commons and the reasons for disagreeing with certain of the Lords' amendments. The Peers had the unpleasant task before them of eating their own words and devouring their own amendments. And they tried to "save their face" by an assumption of mingled conciliatoriness and menace.

Lord Cromer, who had evidently felt rather keenly the criticisms and witticisms to which he had been exposed, disavowed any hostility to the Bill, and moved that the House do not insist on his amendment. Lord Lansdowne expressed the apprehensions of the House when he declared that the Government had accepted the most extreme view of privilege in holding that this was a Money Bill and that the Peers had not the right to touch a line of it. This aggressive doctrine, he declared, was new, for it would prevent the House discussing any Bill dealing with social questions which might involve charges on the Exchequer. The House, however, agreed that Lord Cromer's amendment should not be insisted upon. The same course was followed in respect of the other amendments. Ever and again recurred mutterings of impotent wrath, their lordships complaining that there had been an unrivalled interference with the rights and privileges of the House.

Having abandoned every point wherein they were at issue with the Commons, the Peers found some consolation in carrying the resolution moved by Lord Lansdowne which declared that the House, though not insisting on its amendments, did not accept the reasons offered by the House of Commons, or consent to these reasons hereafter being drawn into a precedent; and which asserted that the Bill was not one of a grant-in-aid or supply to His Majesty, but involved questions of policy affecting necessitous persons in which both Houses were concerned, and with which the House had been accustomed to deal. This motion was carried by 37 votes against 23.

All this fencing and sparring on the part of the reluctant Peers could not disguise the real fact, which was one not of privilege but of force: the nation as a whole was resolved on Pensions and was in no mood to brook interference with

**The Retreat
of the Peers.**

**But "no
precedent!"**

its sovereign will and pleasure. The Peers, who did not mind trying conclusions with a majority, dare not thwart the nation with its mind made up.

The Act at last.

Next day (August 1st) the House re-assembled at noon, and the Commons having been summoned, the Royal Assent was given by commission to the Old Age Pensions Act.

The great deed was done.

CHAPTER LIV

THANKSGIVING

That same afternoon, fifty of our Walworth folk and I crossed a tranquil Channel under a cloudless sky, as the week's guests-to-be of the President of our Settlement, Mademoiselle de Montmort, at her ancestral seat, Château d'Argeronne, in Normandy. We reached the quarters provided for us about midnight. Not till next morning did we all meet our hostess. It being Sunday, we met at what she called a "Christ-service in the woods." All around us rose the tall shafts of the solemn pine: along the wooded aisles we caught glimpses of the vast forest that encompassed us. Through the arching branches overhead as through a screen of curious tracery appeared the dome of sky, mottled white with clouds. In this free cathedral of Nature, stood, robed in white, as priestess of the sylvan shrine, our President and hostess. After birthday greetings and fragrant offering of flowers by the Secretary of our Travel Club—a railway blacksmith of Walworth—I stepped forward and said: "As Warden of the Settlement which has for ten years taken a leading part in the agitation for Old Age Pensions, I have pleasure in conveying to you, the President of the Settlement, the fact that yesterday, just before we left London, the Royal Assent was given to the first Old Age Pensions Act of the United Kingdom."

In the Norman woods.

After hymn and Scripture and prayer, Mademoiselle, standing white-robed against a pine-pillar of the forest-cathedral, told with charming simplicity and pathos the quaint legend of a Norman saint, and made it thrill again with the joy of everyday trustfulness in the Powers that direct and influence at every turn our daily life. Story and speaker and scene made up a perfect parable of the old Galilean kind.

About as complete a contrast as could well be imagined to the August service in the Normandy woods was presented by the environment of another service five months

New Year Sunday.

later, which also it was my duty to conduct. Walworth, on New Year's Sunday, 1909, was almost as dismal as mud and drizzle and fog could make it. It was the sort of day that makes the Londoner, and especially the poor Londoner, cling to his fireside. But it was the first Sunday after the Old Age Pensions Act had come into force. And was there ever a New Year's Day in England like the one that saw more than half a million of the aged saved at a stroke from utter poverty, and ennobled with a tribute of national respect? In the Borough of Southwark alone 1,700 had obtained their pensions, and had drawn the first couple of half-crowns. So, mud and rain and fog notwithstanding, the first day of public worship succeeding must be Pensions Thanksgiving Sunday. Leaflets and posters were issued inviting the aged pensioners of Walworth to join in a Service of Thanks in Browning Hall—"the headquarters of the Pensions movement." Age and feebleness combined are specially sensitive to the terrors of foggy streets and muddy roads and wet clothes. But about a hundred of the pensioners dared the weather, and found their way to Browning Hall. There they received a warm welcome from the men and women of the Settlement, and later, while the orchestra was playing, they were regaled with tea and cake. They formed a pathetic, but joyous spectacle. They were there, the battered and feeble veterans of poverty, but they had won their long fight. The dread of pauperism had been routed: the guerdon of honour had been attained. Precious as the two half-crowns a week were as a means of subsistence, they were worth far more as a proof of social regard and as a buttress of self-respect. Their gratitude was touching, and was lovingly paid to the mere human agent. More than once an aged woman, with moist eyes seized my hand and kissed it in a fervour of thanksgiving. Again and again they said, "You promised us a pension, and they said we never should get it. But now we've got it. You spoke true. God bless you!"

The Orator of Pensions. After singing and prayer, and after two solos, the address was given by—whom more appropriately than by Mr. Frederick Rogers? He spoke of the dark days now passing, and of the new epoch which was just beginning. He referred with warm gratitude to the part played in the movement by Mr. Charles Booth, and by his comrades. He urged for an extension of the boon already conceded, the abolition of the pauper disqualification and sliding scale, as well as the lowering of the age-limit to 65 years. But what had been obtained was, he said, a commencement of the adoption

of the Golden Rule in the conduct of national life. Mr. Rogers spoke from the heart, and greatly moved the audience. Mr. J. A. Dawes, L.C.C., Chairman of the local Pension Sub-Committee, bore glad testimony to the zeal with which his colleagues had spared no time or effort to accelerate the working of the Act.

It was a wonderful experience. We were assembled in the very same hall in which more than ten years before the Agent-General for New Zealand had expounded the provisions of the first Old Age Pensions Act passed within the British Empire. It was in the same buildings which had witnessed the first historic Conference of Mr. Charles Booth with the representatives of British Trade Unions, and which again had seen the formation of the National Committee of Organized Labour. It was the hall in which again and again the forces of Labour had rallied afresh in the prosecution of the ten years' campaign, where Charles Booth and Will Crooks and Richard Seddon and others had heartened their comrades for the fight. These were the premises from which had risen, through all the long years of fluctuating hope and resurgent energy, the voice of collective prayer on behalf of the aged; and there, too, ever and again had been given the assurance of a great Purpose that was working forward without haste and without rest to the destined goal. And now a hundred of the aged had met within these same walls to return heartfelt thanks to Almighty God for the boon which they had received, and in the name of more than half a million of their aged fellow-countrymen to acknowledge the Divine Goodness. In closing the meeting, I could only bear full-hearted witness to the Divine Initiative in the Pensions movement as it had been born again at Browning Hall. Speaking as a social engineer, whose business it had been to gauge and guide the forces that made for social progress, I again assured the audience that the most powerful instrument of all—more powerful than printed propaganda, or public meetings, or Conferences, or votes in Parliament—was prayer. The movement had been cradled, accompanied, and guided to victory by prayer—as they in Browning Hall knew well. The whole procession of unanimities by which the movement had advanced from the brink of disaster to the goal of legislative achievement was to my mind nothing less than a social miracle.

The singing of the doxology by the old pensioners and their younger fellow-citizens was an experience never to be forgotten.

What these walls had seen.

"A social miracle."

CHAPTER LV

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The ten years' siege of Troy is ended. Its tale has now been told. Slowly and with manifold imperfections, in a style far below the worth and wonder of the theme, the story has unwound itself. But the facts are now on record: and the deep meaning of these facts will, as time passes, become more and more apparent. Their sequel will be their best commentary.

Yet the present narrative should not close without an attempt to group the chief characteristics of the movement which it has described, and to estimate their importance. The progress of events has yielded a number of generalizations and conclusions which must also take their place in the record of fact.

**Neither Party
meant
Pensions.**

1. The first is a negative conclusion. But for the independent agitation which these pages narrate, neither of the historic Parties in the State would have enacted Old Age Pensions. To calculate what might have been the result had one or other of the principal causes been absent, is an admittedly difficult task. The place of the absent factor might have been filled by some other and now unknown force. And if one were to speak with the pedantic accuracy of precise logic, one would have to confess that it is, abstractly considered, quite impossible to predicate what would have happened if something else that has actually happened had not happened. Strictly speaking, we cannot declare that the mixture of hydrogen and chlorine will explode only on the application of a beam of light. For it is speculatively possible that some other emanation analogous to X-rays might cause similar explosive results. But, subject to this reservation, it is allowable from a knowledge of the causes and conditions at work in the known sphere, and as a guide to practical judgment, to draw a negative hypothetical conclusion. And that conclusion possesses practical certainty.

The chemist says with perfectly legitimate confidence that if the known means of causing an explosion of chlorine and hydrogen had been absent, no explosion would be possible. Similarly, I may here record the conclusion that but for the independent agitation which these pages narrate, neither of the historic Parties in the State would have enacted Old Age Pensions. Both Parties have proved that they would not, on their own inception and accord, have proceeded to legislation on this question. Nay, more, both Parties in their official capacity have proved their indisposition or absence of intention to move in the matter. These propositions have been abundantly demonstrated in the foregoing narrative, but, as they may be controverted by Party zeal, with or without knowledge, the evidence may here be briefly recalled.

The record of the Unionist Party is too clear to admit of honest doubt or intelligent controversy. It was for ten years the Party in power. During that period it had absolute control of both Houses of Parliament. It had at its disposal one prospective surplus (on the basis of the then existing taxes) of over ten millions sterling: a sum more than sufficient, as the sequel showed, to make the beginning of a national system of Pensions. Before and after the South African War, it could have imposed any fresh taxation that might have been required to provide Pensions for the aged. Yet with all this power and opportunity, the Unionist Party passed no Pensions Act. This inaction speaks louder than any word of the official purpose of the Unionist Party. But words were not wanting. A Unionist who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer during a portion of the long period of his Party's ascendancy, boldly asked from his place in the Commons whether any of them believed that Pensions ever could be realized, and declared that in his judgment no scheme of Pensions could ever be carried out! And the leader of the Party showed by what he said on the Third Reading of the Old Age Pensions Act, 1908, that he had still formed no judgment as to the lines along which Pensions legislation should proceed. He "would much prefer a contributory scheme," but, he added, "we have absolutely not enough evidence before us as to how contributory schemes have worked elsewhere." The tenor of the Unionist speeches in both Houses showed conclusively that after ten years of power, and two years more of opportunity for reflection, the Unionist Party had not advanced so far as even to form the serious outline of a scheme of Old Age Pensions. As that is an indispensable

Not the
Unionist.

Evidence in
deed and word.

preliminary to legislation, the absence of any legislative intent is incontrovertibly established.

Not the
Liberal.

The Liberal Party may point to the Act of 1908 as conclusive proof of its official purpose. As to its official purpose in 1908, and, let us add, 1907, there can be no manner of uncertainty. But the question before us is whether, apart from the independent movement which this book describes, there would have been in the official mind of the Liberal Party any legislative purpose in the direction of Pensions. On this question the speech as well as the silence, the action not less than the inaction, of the official leaders have, as the foregoing pages amply indicate, supplied conclusive and negative testimony. It is enough to remember that the Horsham candidate, after meeting with "a gentleman from the Central Liberal Association," withdrew from his election address a paragraph advocating Pensions; that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, enumerating as Prime Minister in his Albert Hall speech all manner of reforms, near or remote, on which the Party was resolved, never so much as mentioned Pensions; that Mr. Asquith, on introducing the 1908 Budget, boasted that "the present Government came into power and went through the last General Election entirely unpledged in regard to Pensions"; that the election addresses of Ministers in 1906 made no promise of Pensions; and that Mr. Asquith, just after the General Election declared that he did not possess and had "no reasonable expectation of possessing a fund adequate to the purpose of Pensions." Recent events have shown that the Liberal majority returned in 1906 was quite able to pass Finance Bills providing funds adequate to an even greater expenditure than is involved in Pensions. The absence of "expectation" in the Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer is proof, therefore, not of absence of ability but of the absence of a purpose sufficiently determined to ensure legislation. It was not until the resolution embodying the demand of organized Labour was brought forward in the new House of Commons, and Mr. Asquith had come to recognize "the presence of a driving power such as they had never seen before in the House of Commons," that he announced that the Government "hoped to make some progress towards a solution of this problem." The rank and file of Liberal Members had undoubtedly been pledged to support Pensions. But the popular pressure which exacted the pledges was not originated or meditated by the Liberal Party; it had to overcome, and it did overcome,

Manifold proof.

"No reasonable
expectation."

the opposite pressure which was exerted from Liberal headquarters; and its source must be sought in entirely other than Party quarters. Between the policy of official Liberalism on the Education question, and its policy on the question of the aged, the contrast is luminously instructive. Not less illuminative is the different issue of the two policies. The policy which was forced to the front by every kind of official urgency collapsed in disastrous and ignominious defeat. The policy which officialism did its utmost to ignore or repress ended in triumph.

An instructive contrast.

2. That a reform of these vast dimensions should have arrived at the verge of legislative achievement without the official aid of either Party is in itself a marvel which demands explanation. The explanation has been supplied, it is hoped, by this book. Good men and women, in all Parties and in none, combined, irrespective of Party interests, in the interest of the aged. This combination was called into being on the visible plane by the manifold genius and expert authority of Mr. Charles Booth. His eminent personality commanded the respectful attention of men in all Parties. He supplied a scientific basis of action which made mere partizan considerations irrelevant, not to say impertinent. The principles which he unfolded during the first six months of the movement have stood the test of ten years' constant discussion. All that has happened since only confirms the wisdom of the remark by Mr. Charles Fenwick, M.P., at the Newcastle Conference in 1899: when he "hoped that henceforth in the discussion of political measures the ground should be cleared and fundamental principles laid down by social experts after the manner of Mr. Booth." Would that the nation had now imparted to it some such scientific introduction to legislation on the problem of the Unemployed! The contrast in the course of the two movements—for the workless and for the aged—during the last ten years is most instructive.

The Man who saved the Aged.

3. The combination initiated by Mr. Booth has been arranged, sustained, and made effective by means of the National Pensions Committee, and the personification of its purpose in Mr. Frederick Rogers. The principal forces which the Committee rallied and brought into decisive action for this purpose were the forces, first and foremost of organized Labour, and secondarily, of organized Religion. Trade Unions first, Co-operative Societies second, Friendly Societies third, took up their places in the triple host of organized Labour, the Trades Council in the earlier days achieving the distinction of supplying the uniting invitation.

The two decisive Forces: Labour—

The import and potency of this threefold alliance have been conspicuously shown, and the more frequently this conjunction is brought about, the more signal will be the effect on the destinies of the nation.

—**and Religion.** The Congregational Union of England and Wales, the late Cardinal Vaughan, the late Archbishop Temple, Dr. Horton as President of the National Union of Free Churches, pronounced upon the movement the combined blessing of the three great sections of British Christendom: and, as in the Horsham bye-election, the local union of leaders of all the churches on this question proved remarkably effective. This union on behalf of the aged was rendered more significant by the fierce warfare raging among the same churches over the children. The potency of organized religion when united, and its impotence when divided, thus received at the same moment striking illustration. However difficult it may be to secure agreement in the *teaching* of religion, religious bodies can, even now, and with fruitful result, unite to enforce the *practising* of religion in some of its elementary precepts. All sections of British Christendom combined on the Fifth Commandment and helped to bring the nation to practical obedience. There are a great many other similarly rudimentary mandates of the Divine Will which are waiting to be translated into the law of the land: and both for the welfare of the nation and for the good estate of the Catholic Church, the precedent of Pensions ought not to be forgotten.

A potent alliance.

But when a larger co-operation comes about, when the forces of Labour and the forces of Religion mobilize and act together, then, as we have seen, no power in the State can oppose them: Parties and Chambers are powerless before their combined array. Here, again, is an instance that might with advantage be multiplied. For the collective performance of those simple human duties which consist in looking after the hungry and half-clad, the sick and the homeless, the helpless and outcast, is not merely an object which demands the concerted action of the Churches: it is the chief civic aim of all forms of organized Labour. The agitation for Old Age Pensions has opened up a vast prospect of accelerated social reform through the combined activity of organized Labour and organized Religion.

4. These allied forces, as has been shown, were entirely successful in converting the rank and file of both Parties, in convincing or coercing candidates, and in securing generally the support of the nation's judgment. Up to the threshold of Parliament, the tide of victory rolled unhindered. But there

for some years it was stayed. The new Power, which was independent of both the official Parties, required, for, its effectiveness within Parliament, a new organ: an instrument like itself, facile to co-operate with any Party or Parties, but firm and unyielding in pursuit of its distinctive aims. In the old days, the nearest approach to such an organ was to be found in the Labour Members of the Liberal Party. In the country they had rendered admirable assistance to the Pension cause, but in the House, with the eminent exception of Mr. Thomas Burt, they were, as we saw, not too helpful or too hopeful. They were disheartened by the long reign of what they considered to be reaction: and they were dominated almost entirely by the interest and policy of the larger body of which they formed but an appendage. To rouse in them a new spirit, as well as to achieve the new demand, a new and more self-dependent agency was needed. And such an agency the Pensions movement had from its very inception been helping to evolve. Following immediately on a climax of disunion in the British Labour world, the series of Conferences with Mr. Booth formed the fruitful beginning of a new synthesis. On one great question it brought the British Labour world into line and consolidated it into a unit. The same synthetic tendency which had created the National Pensions Committee showed itself in the subsequent formation of the Labour Representation Committee: the first chairman of which was, significantly enough, the organizing Secretary of the National Pensions Committee. So slowly came to be the Labour Party—"that Party"—to quote its rugged precursor—"which is not a Party"—whose sole *raison d'être* was to secure for the overwhelming majority of the nation those social reforms which the older Parties—to speak very mildly—had been too much pre-occupied with other business to execute with proper celerity. The first plank in the platform of the Labour Party was, inevitably, in accordance with the dictates of self-preservation, a legislative reversal of the Taff Valley decision which imperilled the very existence of Trade Unions. But the second plank was entirely national and human. It was the demand of "Pensions for all in old age." Contrast in the light of results the place which Pensions held, or rather did not hold, in the Liberal Party programme: and there is suggested at once the need and the value—to the Pensions movement, at least—of a self-dependent Labour Party. A more substantial portent was afforded by the Woolwich election in 1903, and the arrival in Parliament of Mr. Will Crooks, one of the earliest and most prominent members of

A new organ
needed in
Parliament.

The Labour
Party born.

What it
accomplished.

the National Pensions Committee. At once Pensions became a "live" question in the House. With the General Election of 1906, the new Labour group entered the House as a "Party in being." Notwithstanding the revolutionary change which had taken place, there was only one Party in the House that was officially pledged to legislation on Old Age Pensions: and that was the self-dependent Labour Party. Seven of its members held a leading place in the National Pensions Committee, and in the House they were boldly true to the cause they had championed in the country. Pensions were at once by them—happily not by them alone—thrust into the forefront of Parliamentary attention: and they were not amenable to any possibility of repression by Ministerial Whips. More than to any other Member outside the Government, the prominence given to Pensions in the Parliament which began in 1906 is due to the Chairman of the National Pensions Committee, who is now Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party, Mr. G. N. Barnes. He was the personal embodiment in Parliament of the Pensions movement. But for the independent, though entirely conciliatory, action of Mr. Barnes and his colleagues in the Labour Party, it is a question whether, amid the throng of other measures demanding Liberal attention, the persistent pressure needed to compel Government action in respect of Pensions would have been supplied by the Ministerial rank and file. In the debate on the first Address of the new Parliament, the first speech which insisted on Pensions was delivered by a member of the new Party (Mr. Barnes): he was followed by a Liberal (Mr. Lever). The first Resolution on Pensions was moved by another new Labour Member (Mr. O'Grady), and seconded by a Liberal (Mr. Groves). These two incidents represent the dynamic order: Labour first, Liberalism second. A Liberal Member described to me the situation by saying: "The Labour Party may be the steel spearhead, but it would be useless without the wooden shaft of the Liberal Party." He did not at first perceive that, even so, without the Labour tip of steel, the Liberal Party would have been but a wooden weapon at the best. The progress of Pensions in Parliament is of itself alone abundant justification of the existence of a distinct and self-dependent Labour Party.

Spearhead and shaft.

The National Committee still needed.

5. Yet, though the new Labour Party provided the new organ needed to give Parliamentary effect to our movement, its separateness as a Party made the National Pensions Committee still necessary as an instrument of synthesis within Parliament as without. The group consisting of Labour Members, Liberal-Labour Members, and the more

earnest Liberal Members, which met again and again to impress on the Government the importance of the immediate enactment of Pensions, and which made reiterated representations to that effect to Cabinet Ministers, was convened by the National Committee and attended by its secretaries: and by that group also was organized the imposing deputation of Members which won from Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer definite and explicit adhesion to our principles. The impression which once prevailed that the advent of the Labour Party had made the National Pensions Committee superfluous, was soon dispelled by the course of events. It has been disavowed by leaders of the Party itself. The prime function of the Party is legislative, or executive: of the Committee educative. The energies of the Party must be diffused over the innumerable questions and measures which came up in Parliament. The energies of the Committee are exclusively concentrated on the one object of its existence. What is most decisive is that the Labour Party is now a distinct and definite Party: whereas the Committee remains as from the first a body attached to no Party, and capable of combining all Parties in the furtherance of the common aim. So the Committee continues to exist, and to agitate for the complete reform of which the Act of 1908 is no more than the first instalment.

6. The small cost at which this momentous agitation has been conducted is not one of its least distinctions. The accounts of the National Pensions Committee show an average yearly expenditure of no more than £400! £400 a year for ten years resulting in an *initial* annual expenditure by the nation of £8,000,000 is something like a "record." Annual cost.

7. The ethical features of the movement have been not less remarkable than its financial or political. The leading agitators have been men as far removed as possible from the amiable weakling: they are men of strong convictions and pronounced individuality: veterans most of them in industrial warfare: yet during the whole course of the ten years' agitation, I cannot remember having heard one angry word. In this respect also, if I mistake not, the movement is almost if not entirely unique. Not one cross word!

8. Frequent reference has been made in these pages to a still more extraordinary fact: the unanimity which had marked all gatherings held in connection with the movement. At the first Conference this unanimity was regarded as a portent: and such it was. But it has become the almost unbroken tradition of the movement. In committee and sub-committee, in the most widely representative Conference and The procession of unanimities.

in the freest of open-air meetings, in Congress after Congress of Trade Unions and Co-operators—in gatherings comprising men of the most opposite schools and Parties, the all but uniform result has been complete and entire agreement. Even in Parliament itself, where men are sent and pledged to disagree with each other, the tradition of unanimity was not reversed. Such exceptions as there were to the rule only made the rule more conspicuous, as when a solitary hand was held up against the Resolution in the first Bristol Conference, or when a wrecking Amendment on the Second Reading was defeated by 417 votes against 29, or when the hostile Amendment on the Third Reading could only secure ten votes against 315. The House of Lords, as directly representing only itself, belongs to a category apart from the nation. But the alacrity with which the Peers abandoned their position of disagreement with the Commons was a touching confession on their part to the unity of national purpose. This procession of unanimities, I am bound to repeat, is nothing less than a social miracle.

Clean hands.

9. Side by side with the dominance of unity must be placed the purity of the movement. It was throughout a clean agitation. There has been no dirty work about it: no dishonest or dishonouring compromises: no backstairs intrigue: no bargaining of principle for the sake of support. The clear statement of demand made at the outset has never been sullied or clouded or abandoned. Instalments have been cordially accepted: co-operation, even if incomplete, has been welcomed: but the flag has never once been lowered. It has never once been stained.

**Unexpected-
ness—**

10. Two curiously opposite phases of public feeling have marked the reception of Pensions. In spite of the long agitation and preparation of the public mind, the actual coming of Pensions was greeted with surprise. Politicians were surprised. Many notable persons are still hopelessly puzzled. Keen observers of political life were quite taken aback by the unexpected portent. Legislators spoke as if it had suddenly risen out of the sea. In both Houses there was a sense expressed as though Pensions had without notice taken up the Government, rather than that the Government had taken up Pensions. Until the last moment there was incredulity in many quarters. But now Pensions, once come, are quietly accepted as a matter of course. Once inconceivable as July heats amid January snows, they are reckoned on as more certain than warm weather in the dog-days. They have been assimilated to the national life with such swiftness that men have almost ceased to talk about them. They have

**—and
acceptedness.**

come with something of the silence and certainty of a process of Nature, like the dawn of day, or the advent of spring, or the change of the harvest-field from green to gold. The combination of unexpectedness with acceptedness carries with it also something of the mystery of Nature.

11. The mystery is deepened by the elemental change which Pensions have introduced into the life of the nation. They are pronounced—they are now being proved—to be a revolutionary innovation. The C.O.S. and Earl Wemyss declared the Bill to be a measure which produced a social revolution. Lord Cromer proclaimed it the inauguration of a financial revolution. Revolution is a phrase all too frequently applied by incautious lips: but it has been deliberately used of the Pensions Act by our cautious Northumbrian Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey.* The President of the Local Government Board declares that the Act has wrought a revolution in administration. Its immediate effects certainly partake of a revolutionary character.

We see what we foresaw. The enactment of Pensions would, we predicted from the first, precipitate the long-delayed and inevitable revision of our system of taxation, whatever may be the kind of revision favoured by the Government in power. The Budget of 1909 is the direct consequence of the Act of 1908: and it marks only the beginning of the fiscal changes which the new era inaugurated by Pensions will bring with it. The first huge instalment of the costly reforms demanded by the new democracy has arrived. Not with the bursting of bombs, not with the click of the guillotine, but with the quiet handing over in innumerable post-offices of a weekly couple of half-crowns has the English revolution of the twentieth century begun.

12. Every one of the foregoing characteristics is in itself remarkable. Many of them are unique. Some belong to the first order of social importance. Taken singly, each suggests an unusual cause. But taken all together they form a combination which admits of only one transcendent Explanation. Qualities and events, so numerous, so varied, so exceptional and so dynamic, could not have converged and coincided in a single movement without the arrangement and direction of One ordering Purpose—a Purpose more and other than human. No man foresaw: no man designed: no

A revolution!

The Ultimate Conclusion.

* "If I would select amongst the deeds of the present Government one which I would give as an instance approaching a revolution, I should rather select that of Old Age Pensions. . . . It was, no doubt, a considerable change but a change which, even if it be revolution, was one of which ample notice had been given."

man combined the actual concourse of events. By the imperative goad of fact, we are driven into the presence of the deepest and most potent Factor of all. We can only attribute this assemblage of character and circumstance to the direct action of the Will which is the Ultimate Force of Nature and History.

GOD intervened.

This is a tremendous conclusion. But is it not irresistible?

The man of the world, in Church or State, disturbed by the horror of Aught beyond the world at work within the world, takes refuge in the cry of Irreverence! "Why drag sacred names and sacred associations into the mud of politics?" But we should be worse than irreverent if we refused to discern behind so momentous a departure in human affairs the propulsion of the Power which governs history.

The man of the schools, under hypnotic dread of anything suggestive of his bogey "Miracle," declaims against the idea in the name of the immanence—the incessant and ubiquitous operation—of the Universal Spirit. Is not 'Divine intervention' an impious phrase, implying One who is ordinarily an Outsider or an Absentee?"

By no means. Without controversy, the devout soul feels pulsating in the most trivial events of common life the Omnipotent Energy: traces Its working everywhere in the movements, gradual or convulsive, of nature and history. Everywhere and always, around the world and the race of men, stretch the Everlasting Arms. But there are times when, in the old Hebrew phrase, the Eternal "lays bare His arm." "The Hands which reach through Nature moulding men" appear ungloved. Normal or customary processes are seen to fail. Use and wont break down. The folly and the hardheartedness of men or nations threaten to make void the purpose of the Highest. Then the Inner Will asserts Itself. The Stream of tendency washes out new channels. The new cleavage shows the lustre of the Divine metal of which the universe is made. The wheels and revolving bands of the ordinary machinery stand silent: while the Driving Force bears direct on unexpected transmitters.

Ever and again recurs "the day of the Lord."

And has not the movement recorded in this book been rich in the marks of His Coming? Its moral purity, its freedom from anger, its all but unbroken succession of unanimities, its poverty, its use of the lowly, its operation in the hearts of good men in all Parties, its backing by leaders in all the Churches, its entirely independent course, its creative action in the State, its unexpectedness, its tremendous revolutionary potencies and consequences—are these not proofs of His presence?

Was not the occasion worthy of the emergence of the Controlling Force from behind the scenes of the human drama? More than a million of the aged left destitute, degraded, unfriended, in a land of overflowing plenty, under the shadow of a Christian civilization: and beyond them a huge host, well-nigh ten times their number, hungry and half-clad and ill-housed, struggling in poverty and worklessness, or sinking into sodden despair: all this mass of misery at the Home of an Empire the like of which His world has never seen, which includes one-fourth of His human family, which could and which might lead mankind along the paths of social justice and of universal peace: was it not "time for Him to work"? Was not intervention in such an "extremity" and at such an "opportunity," with consequences and influences reaching right round the earth and extending to far-off ages, worthy of a Divine interposition? Was not the salvation of the aged from want and shame, and the immeasurable sequel of social redemption sufficient for "a God to mingle in the game"?

The ordinary political tools had proved broken reeds. The putative leaders of the people were hesitating even to follow the crowd. The shepherds of the State fed themselves: they fed not the sheep. What wonder if the Great Shepherd of the sheep took up the work left undone, and in ways undreamt-of led His hunger-smitten flock towards the green pastures?

The ancient words recur and bring a clear ray of Hebrew insight into all the complexities of the modern situation:

"The year of My redeemed had come. And I looked, and there was none to help: and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore Mine own arm brought salvation."

The power of His redemptive intervention flowed into the life of the nation through the channels of prayer. The lowly souls who responded to His touch in prayer became the live wires along which rushed His electric Force. To quote

Hebrew imagery again, He rode to the decisive encounter "enthroned upon the prayers and praises" of His people. The forces which were generated or liberated or transmitted by prayer produced the revolutionary effects, but produced them with the noiseless resistlessness of the tides. These pages have borne continuous witness to the atmosphere of prayer in which the entire movement was swathed and saturated and propelled.

And if at the close the narrator may revert to the mystery of the week of spiritual combat which preceded the very first beginnings of the movement as he knew it, he can only suppose that he was enabled by the Strength that came to him from above to overcome on the unseen battleground the opposing forces which might have made havoc of the movement on the visible plane; but which, once routed by the help of the Victor Invisible, were ever after, by the abiding comradeship of prayer, effectually overcome. Hence no angry word through the ten years' struggle: hence the direct convergence of unimpeded forces: hence the frictionless coincidences, when event fitted into event as parts of a perfect machine and worked together smoothly and silently: hence the absence of Party venom: hence the unchecked glow of national sympathy: hence the clear path to legislative victory.

In fine, "I report as I saw, I report as a man may, of GOD'S work":—

His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory.

His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the nations.

*He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute
And hath not despised their prayer.*

APPENDIX A

OLD AGE PENSIONS ACT, 1908 [8 EDW. 7. CH. 40]

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

1. Right to receive Old Age Pension.
2. Statutory conditions for receipt of Old Age Pension.
3. Disqualification for Old Age Pension.
4. Calculation of means.
5. Mode of paying Pensions.
6. Old Age Pension to be inalienable.
7. Determination of claims and questions.
8. Local Pension Committee, Central Pension Authority, and Pension Officers.
9. Penalty for false statements, etc., and repayment where pensioner is found not to have been entitled to Pension.
10. Regulations and expenses.
11. Application to Scotland, Ireland, and the Scilly Isles.
12. Commencement and short title.

Schedule.

CHAPTER 40.

An Act to provide for Old Age Pensions.

(1st August, 1908.)

Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. (1) Every person in whose case the conditions laid down by this Act for the receipt of an Old Age Pension (in this Act referred to as statutory conditions) are fulfilled, shall be entitled to receive such a Pension under this Act so long as those conditions continue to be fulfilled, and so long as he is not disqualified under this Act for the receipt of the Pension.

(2) An Old Age Pension under this Act shall be at the rate set forth in the schedule to this Act.

(3) The sums required for the payment of Old Age Pensions under this Act shall be paid out of moneys provided by Parliament.

(4) The receipt of an Old Age Pension under this Act shall not deprive the pensioner of any franchise, right, or privilege, or subject him to any disability.

2. The statutory conditions for the receipt of an Old Age Pension by any person are :—

- (1) The person must have attained the age of seventy :
- (2) The person must satisfy the Pension Authorities that for at least twenty years up to the date of the receipt of any sum on account of a Pension he has been a British subject, and has had his residence, as defined by regulations under this Act, in the United Kingdom.
- (3) The person must satisfy the Pension Authorities that his yearly means as calculated under this Act do not exceed thirty-one pounds ten shillings.

3. (1) A person shall be disqualified for receiving or continuing to receive an Old Age Pension under this Act, notwithstanding the fulfilment of the statutory conditions :—

(a) While he is in receipt of any poor relief (other than relief excepted under this provision), and, until the thirty-first day of December nineteen hundred and ten unless Parliament otherwise determines, if he has at any time since the first day of January nineteen hundred and eight received, or hereafter receives, any such relief: Provided that for the purpose of this provision—

(i) any medical or surgical assistance (including food or comforts) supplied by or on the recommendation of a medical officer; or

(ii) any relief given to any person by means of the maintenance of any dependant of that person in any lunatic asylum, infirmary, or hospital, or the payment of any expenses of the burial of a dependant; or

(iii) any relief (other than medical or surgical assistance, or relief herein-before specifically exempted) which by law is expressly declared not to be a disqualification for registration as a parliamentary elector, or a reason for depriving any person of any franchise, right, or privilege;

shall not be considered as poor relief :

(b) If, before he becomes entitled to a Pension, he has habitually failed to work according to his ability, opportunity, and need, for the maintenance or benefit of himself and those legally dependent upon him :

Provided that a person shall not be disqualified

under this paragraph if he has continuously for ten years up to attaining the age of sixty, by means of payments to Friendly, Provident, or other societies, or Trade Unions, or other approved steps, made such provision against old age, sickness, infirmity, or want or loss of employment as may be recognised as proper provision for the purpose by regulations under this Act, and any such provision, when made by the husband in the case of a married couple living together, shall as respects any right of the wife to a Pension, be treated as provision made by the wife as well as by the husband :

(c) While he is detained in any asylum within the meaning of the Lunacy Act, 1890, or while he is being maintained in any place as a pauper or criminal lunatic :

(d) During the continuance of any period of disqualification arising or imposed in pursuance of this section in consequence of conviction for an offence.

(2) Where a person has been before the passing of this Act, or is after the passing of this Act, convicted of any offence, and ordered to be imprisoned without the option of a fine or to suffer any greater punishment, he shall be disqualified for receiving or continuing to receive an Old Age Pension under this Act while he is detained in prison in consequence of the order, and for a further period of ten years after the date on which he is released from prison.

(3) Where a person of sixty years of age or upwards having been convicted before any court is liable to have a detention order made against him under the Inebriates Act, 1898, and is not necessarily, by virtue of the provisions of this Act, disqualified for receiving or continuing to receive an Old Age Pension under this Act, the court may, if they think fit, order that the person convicted be so disqualified for such period, not exceeding ten years, as the court direct.

4 (1) In calculating the means of a person for the purpose of this Act account shall be taken of—

(a) the income which that person may reasonably expect to receive during the succeeding year in cash, excluding any sums receivable on account of an Old Age Pension under this Act, that income, in the absence of other means for ascertaining the income, being taken to be the income actually received during the preceding year;

(b) the yearly value of any advantage accruing to that person from the use or enjoyment of any property

belonging to him which is personally used or enjoyed by him;

- (c) the yearly income which might be expected to be derived from any property belonging to that person which, though capable of investment or profitable use, is not so invested or profitably used by him; and
- (d) the yearly value of any benefit or privilege enjoyed by that person.

(2) In calculating the means of a person being one of a married couple living together in the same house, the means shall not in any case be taken to be a less amount than half the total means of the couple.

(3) If it appears that any person has directly or indirectly deprived himself of any income or property in order to qualify himself for the receipt of an Old Age Pension, or for the receipt of an Old Age Pension at a higher rate than that to which he would otherwise be entitled under this Act, that income or the yearly value of that property shall, for the purposes of this section, be taken to be part of the means of that person.

5. (1) An Old Age Pension under this Act, subject to any directions of the Treasury in special cases, shall be paid weekly in advance in such manner and subject to such conditions as to identification or otherwise as the Treasury direct.

(2) A Pension shall commence to accrue on the first Friday after the claim for the Pension has been allowed, or, in the case of a claim provisionally allowed, on the first Friday after the day on which the claimant becomes entitled to receive the Pension.

6. Every assignment of or charge on and every agreement to assign or charge an Old Age Pension under this Act shall be void, and, on the bankruptcy of a person entitled to an Old Age Pension, the Pension shall not pass to any trustee or other person acting on behalf of the creditors.

7. (1) All claims for Old Age Pensions under this Act and all questions whether the statutory conditions are fulfilled in the case of any person claiming such a Pension, or whether those conditions continue to be fulfilled in the case of a person in receipt of such a Pension, or whether a person is disqualified for receiving or continuing to receive a Pension shall be considered and determined as follows:—

- (a) Any such claim or question shall stand referred to the local Pension Committee, and the committee shall

(except in the case of a question which has been originated by the Pension Officer and on which the committee have already received his report), before considering the claim or question, refer it for report and inquiry to the Pension Officer :

- (b) The Pension Officer shall inquire into and report upon any claim or question so referred to him, and the local Pension Committee shall, on the receipt of the report of the Pension Officer and after obtaining from him or from any other source if necessary any further information as to the claim or question, consider the case and give their decision upon the claim or question :
- (c) The Pension Officer, and any person aggrieved, may appeal to the central Pension Authority against a decision of the local Pension Committee allowing or refusing a claim for Pension or determining any question referred to them within the time and in the manner prescribed by regulations under this Act, and any claim or question in respect of which an appeal is so brought shall stand referred to the central Pension Authority, and shall be considered and determined by them :
- (d) If any person is aggrieved by the refusal or neglect of a local Pension Committee to consider a claim for a Pension, or to determine any question referred to them, that person may apply in the prescribed manner to the central Pension Authority, and that authority may, if they consider that the local Pension Committee have refused or neglected to consider and determine the claim or question within a reasonable time, themselves consider and determine the claim or question in the same manner as on an appeal from the decision of the local Pension Committee.

(2) The decision of the local Pension Committee on any claim or question which is not referred to the central Pension Authority and the decision of the central Pension Authority on any claim or question which is so referred to them, shall be final and conclusive.

8. (1) The local Pension Committee shall be a committee appointed for every borough and urban district, having a population according to the last published census for the time being of twenty thousand or over, and for every county (excluding the area of any such borough or district), by the council of the borough, district, or county.

The persons appointed to be members of a local Pension Committee need not be members of the council by which they are appointed.

(2) A local Pension Committee may appoint such and so many sub-committees, consisting either wholly or partly of the members of the committee as the committee think fit, and a local Pension Committee may delegate, either absolutely or under such conditions as they think fit, to any such sub-committee any powers and duties of the local Pension Committee under this Act.

(3) The central Pension Authority shall be the Local Government Board, and the Board may act through such committee, persons, or person appointed by them as they think fit.

(4) Pension Officers shall be appointed by the Treasury, and the Treasury may appoint such number of those officers as they think fit to act for such areas as they direct.

(5) Any reference in this Act to Pension Authorities shall be construed as a reference to the Pension Officer, the local Pension Committee, and the central Pension Authority, or to any one of them, as the case requires.

9. (1) If for the purpose of obtaining or continuing an Old Age Pension under this Act, either for himself or for any other person, or for the purpose of obtaining or continuing an Old Age Pension under this Act for himself or for any other person at a higher rate than that appropriate to the case, any person knowingly makes any false statement or false representation, he shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, with hard labour.

(2) If it is found at any time that a person has been in receipt of an Old Age Pension under this Act while the statutory conditions were not fulfilled in his case or while he was disqualified for receiving the Pension, he or, in the case of his death, his personal representative, shall be liable to repay to the Treasury any sums paid to him in respect of the Pension while the statutory conditions were not fulfilled or while he was disqualified for receiving the Pension, and the amount of those sums may be recovered as a debt due to the Crown.

10. (1) The Treasury in conjunction with the Local Government Board and with the Postmaster-General (so far as relates to the Post Office) may make regulations for carrying this Act into effect, and in particular—

(a) for prescribing the evidence to be required as to the

fulfilment of statutory conditions and for defining the meaning of residence for the purposes of this Act; and

- (b) for prescribing the manner in which claims to Pensions may be made, and the procedure to be followed on the consideration and determination of claims and questions to be considered and determined by Pension Officers and local Pension Committees or by the central Pension Authority, and the mode in which any question may be raised as to the continuance, in the case of a pensioner, of the fulfilment of the statutory conditions, and as to the disqualification of a pensioner; and
- (c) as to the number, quorum, term of office, and proceedings generally of the local Pension Committee and the use by the Committee, with or without payment, of any offices of a local authority, and the provision to be made for the immediate payment of any expenses of the committee which are ultimately to be paid by the Treasury.

(2) The regulations shall provide for enabling claimants for Pensions to make their claims and obtain information as respects Old Age Pensions under this Act through the Post Office, and for provisionally allowing claims to Pensions before the date on which the claimant will become actually entitled to the Pension, and for notice being given by registrars of births and deaths to the Pension Officers or local Pension Committees of every death of a person over seventy registered by them, in such manner and subject to such conditions as may be laid down by the regulations, and for making the procedure for considering and determining on any claim for a Pension or question with respect to an Old Age Pension under this Act as simple as possible.

(3) Every regulation under this Act shall be laid before each House of Parliament forthwith, and, if an address is presented to His Majesty by either House of Parliament within the next subsequent twenty-one days on which that House has sat next after any such regulation is laid before it praying that the regulation may be annulled, His Majesty in Council may annul the regulation, and it shall thenceforth be void, but without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done thereunder.

(4) Any expenses incurred by the Treasury in carrying this Act into effect, and the expenses of the Local Government Board and the local Pension Committees under this Act up

to an amount approved by the Treasury, shall be defrayed out of moneys provided by Parliament.

11. (1) In the application of this Act to Scotland, the expression "Local Government Board" means the Local Government Board for Scotland; the expression "borough" means royal or parliamentary burgh; the expression "urban district" means police burgh; the population limit for boroughs and urban districts shall not apply; and the expression "Lunacy Act, 1890," means the Lunacy (Scotland) Acts, 1857 to 1900.

(2) In the application of this Act to Ireland, the expression "Local Government Board" means the Local Government Board for Ireland; ten thousand shall be substituted for twenty thousand as the population limit for boroughs and urban districts; and the expression "asylum within the meaning of the Lunacy Act, 1890," means a lunatic asylum within the meaning of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898.

(3) In the application of this Act to the Isles of Scilly, those isles shall be deemed to be a county and the council of those isles the council of a county.

12. (1) A person shall not be entitled to the receipt of an Old Age Pension under this Act until the first day of January nineteen hundred and nine, and no such Pension shall begin to accrue until that day.

(2) This Act may be cited as the Old Age Pensions Act, 1908.

MEANS OF PENSIONER.	RATE OF PENSION PER WEEK.
Where the yearly means of the pensioner as calculated under this Act—	s. d.
Do not exceed 21 <i>l.</i>	5 0
Exceed 21 <i>l.</i> , but do not exceed 23 <i>l.</i> 12 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>	4 0
Exceed 23 <i>l.</i> 12 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> , but do not exceed 26 <i>l.</i> 5 <i>s.</i>	3 0
Exceed 26 <i>l.</i> 5 <i>s.</i> , but do not exceed 28 <i>l.</i> 17 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>	2 0
Exceed 28 <i>l.</i> 17 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> , but do not exceed 31 <i>l.</i> 10 <i>s.</i>	1 0
Exceed 31 <i>l.</i> 10 <i>s.</i>	No pension

APPENDIX B

THE NATIONAL PENSIONS COMMITTEE IN 1908

A Free State-Pension for Everyone on Reaching 65 Years of Age.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR

Appointed at the Seven Conferences of the Right Hon. Charles Booth, with Representatives of Trade Unions, Friendly and Co-operative Societies.

London or National Unions.

Rt. Hon. John Burns, M.P.

*Geo. N. Barnes, M.P. (Secretary A.S.E.), London.

*Margaret Bondfield (Shop Assistants), London.

F. Chandler, J.P. (Secretary Carpenters and Joiners), Manchester.

A. J. Collett (Clerks), London.

Will Crooks, L.C.C., M.P., Poplar.

James Kidd (A.S.E.), Greenwich.

John Lamb (Operative Plasterers), London.

Fredk. Maddison, M.P., Wandsworth.

J. Macdonald, London Trades Council.

S. Masterson (Iron Founders), London.

James Macpherson (Shop Assistants), London.

E. T. Mendell, London Cabdrivers' Union.

Benj. Wright (A.S.E.), London.

Isaac Mitchell, London.

The Midlands.

*Edward Cadbury, Birmingham.

W. Cope, Birmingham.

Allan Granger (Typographical Association), Birmingham.

*Albert Stanley, M.P. (Miners), Cannock.

*Councillor J. V. Stevens, Birmingham.

Councillor J. Taylor (Midland Trades Federation), Dudley.

*Robert Waite, Danetree Cottage, Linden Road, Bournville, Birmingham.

W. A. Dalley, 6, Link Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.
Convener.

Northumberland and Durham.

*Rt. Hon. Thos. Burt, M.P. (Northumberland Miners),
 Newcastle-on-Tyne.
 John Johnson, M.P. (Durham Miners), Durham.
 James Burn (A.S.E.), Sunderland.
 R. Knight, J.P. (Boilermakers), Newcastle.
 Canon Moore Ede, Whitburn.
 *Alex. Wilkie, M.P. (Secretary Shipwrights), 8, Eldon
 Square, Newcastle-on-Tyne. *Convener.*

Nottingham.

G. Thundercliffe (Bakers), *President.*
 Councillor J. E. Pendleton (Trimmers), *Vice-President.*
 W. A. Appleton (Lace Makers), *Vice-President.*
 G. Allcroft (Lace Makers), *Treasurer.*
 W. Wesson (Letterpress Printers).
 G. Butler (Certificated Teachers).
 L. Spencer (Notts Miners).
 S. Hopkinson (Tool Makers).
 E. Gutteridge (Designers, etc.).

West of England and South Wales.

F. Freeman (O.S.M.), Bristol.
 W. R. Oxley, Bristol.
 S. H. Whitehouse (Somerset Miners), Radstock.
 Councillor J. Curle, J.P.
 *E. H. Jarvis, 91, Greville Road, Southville, Bristol.
Convener.

Lancashire and Cheshire.

Councillor W. Carr, Chester, *President.*
 F. Stott, Warrington, *Vice-President.*
 A. Round, Bury, *Treasurer.*
 Geo. D. Kelley, M.P., J.P., Manchester, *Secretary.*
 E. Byrne.
 J. R. Clynes, M.P.
 Councillor Hacking.
 Councillor Knowles.
 R. Tootill.

Leicester.

Rev. F. L. Donaldson, M.A., Christian Social Union.
 Job Cobley, Trades Council.
 Councillor Chaplin, Trades Council.

*Councillor Hudson, Foresters.
 W. Lowe, Boot and Shoe Clickers Society.
 Amos Sherriff, I.L.P.
 Thomas Carter, I.L.P.
 L. Flude, Co-operative Hosiery.
 A. Hill, Boot and Shoe Operatives.
 F. Sutton, Printers' Union.
 J. W. H. Ward, Boot and Shoe Operatives.
 J. Nicholson, Coach Builders Union.
 E. Smith, Building Trades Council.
 F. Hughes, Building Trades Council.
 W. T. Lane, Friendly Societies.
 J. Aldridge, Friendly Societies.
 *Charles Freak, Boot and Shoe Operatives.
 E. Poynton, Friendly Societies.
 *James Holmes, Hosiery Federation.

Yorkshire.

F. W. Booth, Hull Trades Council.
 E. Harvey, Bradford Trades Council.
 Councillor Parker, M.P., Halifax.
 *Councillor O. Connellan, 3, Faith Street, Leeds (Leeds Trades Council). *Convener.*

Cardiff.

Cardiff Trades Council.
 Councillor J. Chappell, Cardiff County Council, 97, Carlisle Street, Cardiff. *Convener.*

Glasgow and West of Scotland.

George Galloway (Kinning Park Co-operative Society), *Chairman.*
 Jno. A. Glen (Glasgow and Suburbs Co-operative Conference Association), *Treasurer.*
 Jas. Sneddon (Central District Co-operative Conference Association).
 C. H. Anderson (Plasterers' Society).
 Daniel Baird (Plasterers' Society).
 Councillor James Boyd (Secretary B.O.A.F.G.).
 John Davidson (Brushmakers).
 Chas. Jackson (Typographical Society).
 William James (Masons).
 John Lithgow (Furnishing Trades).
 Robert Steven (A.O.F.).
 James Young (U.C.B.S. Manager).
 *B. H. Shaw (Glasgow Trades Council), *Secretary.*

East of Scotland.

Jas. Lochhead (Co-operator), *Chairman*.
Walter B. T. Bell (Edinburgh Trades Council), *Vice-Chairman*.
John Moffat, *Treasurer*.
Thos. Wilson (Edinburgh Trades Council).
James Thorburn (Broxburn Co-operative Association).
Alexander Muir (Tailors).
David Petrie (Leith Provident Co-operative Association).
Geo. Gray (Norton Park Co-operative Association).
Wm. Colville (Pattern Makers).
Jno. Stewart (Decorative Glass Workers), *Secretary*.

Officers:

*George N. Barnes, M.P. (A.S.E.), *Chairman*.
*G. D. Kelley, M.P., J.P., *Vice-Chairman*.
*Edward Cadbury, Bournville, Birmingham, *Treasurer*.
*R. Waite, Danetree Cottage, Linden Road, Bournville, Birmingham; and
*F. Herbert Stead, M.A. (Browning Settlement), 29, Grosvenor Park, S.E., *Hon. Secretaries*.
Frederick Rogers, Browning Hall, York Street, Walworth, S.E., *Organising Secretary*.

* These form the Executive.

APPENDIX C

NUMBER OF PENSIONERS

From the 52nd Report of the Commissioners of His Majesty's Inland Revenue for the year ended March 31st, 1909, the following extract is taken:—

TABLE 223.—Number of Claims received, Pensions granted, etc., during the period October 1st, 1908, to March 31st, 1909.

	England.	Wales.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
(1) Number of Claims received	459,087	31,668	85,408	261,668	837,831
(2) (1) " " " rejected	47,795	4,135	6,871	43,299	102,100
(1) By Pension Committees or on appeal by the Local Government Board on account of—					
(a) Age	5,931	534	2,091	20,536	29,092
(b) Receipt of Poor Relief	16,061	1,180	1,883	7,932	27,056
(c) Means	15,365	1,466	1,504	8,893	27,228
(d) Other causes ...	4,143	285	757	2,483	7,668
(2) As being obviously invalid	6,295	670	636	3,455	11,056
(3) PENSIONS IN FORCE ON MARCH 31st	369,037	24,663	70,294	183,500	647,494
At 5s.	322,023	21,877	65,699	172,966	582,565
" 4s.	17,238	1,034	1,670	3,674	23,616
" 3s.	16,745	978	1,725	3,827	23,275
" 2s.	8,192	478	752	2,007	11,429
" 1s.	4,839	296	448	1,026	6,609
(4) Number of pensioners whose deaths were reported during the quarter ended March 31st, 1909	11,846	753	2,000	3,632	18,231

APPENDIX D

THANKS

1. THE THANKS OF THE GOVERNMENT

At the Fourteenth Annual Public Meeting of the Robert Browning Settlement, held in Browning Hall on April 22nd, the Right Hon. Herbert Samuel, M.P., was present, and in the course of his address said that the influence of the Browning Settlement was now more than local: it was national. The whole country was grateful for the splendid educational work which the Settlement had done on the subject of Old Age Pensions. As a member of the Government which had had the great privilege of bringing Pensions into existence, and speaking on behalf of his colleagues he tendered to the Settlement the thanks of the Government.

2. TESTIMONIAL TO FREDERICK ROGERS

On November 5th, 1909, in Browning Hall, a cheque for £161 and a framed address were presented to Mr. F. Rogers "in recognition of his work for Old Age Pensions, education and literature." The platform, the audience, and the messages read represented a most wide and varied constituency. Labour and Literature, clergy and peerage, Government and Opposition, joined in tributes of affection and admiration. John Burns wrote: "I join with all your friends in the kindly sentiments that will be expressed and which you so richly deserve." Canon and Mrs. Barnett wired congratulations to "the apostle of Pensions." Cordial greetings were sent by Mr. Charles Booth and Mr. Ed. Cadbury, Dr. Furnivall and Mr. Keir Hardie. Among the speakers who vied in eulogy were Mr. G. N. Barnes, M.P., Mr. Will Steadman, M.P., Dr. Sidney Lee, Mr. Hayward (chairman of the presentation committee), Mr. Bowerman, M.P. (who made the presentation in the place of Mr. Thomas Burt), Mr. G. D. Kelley, M.P., and Mr. James Barnes (secretary of the presentation committee).

Lord Milner joined in warmly congratulating "an old friend who had done a big thing," and said: "What he has done is

what I believed in and believed was coming, but the remarkable fact is that so great a change in the ideas of the people of this country on a very fundamental question should have been effected in so short a time." Of Mr. Rogers, he said: "I believe that the greatest of all his qualifications was his power in putting his case in a way that went home to men as men, and not as politicians."

3. ADDRESS TO MR. CHARLES BOOTH FROM THE NATIONAL PENSIONS COMMITTEE

To the Right Hon. Charles Booth, Privy Councillor, Fellow of the Royal Society, D.Sc. in the University of Cambridge, D.C.L. in the University of Oxford, LL.D. in the University of Liverpool.

We, the undersigned members and supporters of the National Committee of Organized Labour, desire to offer you our sincere congratulations on the passing of the first Old Age Pensions Act in the United Kingdom.

To you, more than to any other man, this first instalment of justice to the aged is due. Eleven years ago Lord Rothschild's Committee of experts had declared all Pensions schemes impracticable, and had declined to consider the scheme which you had advocated. Both Parties in the State appeared to acquiesce in this negative result.

Then you consented to expound your views before a series of Conferences composed of representatives of Trade Unions, Friendly Societies, and Co-operative Societies. Everywhere you secured the most impressive unanimity in support of your proposals. The outcome of these Conferences was the National Committee of Organized Labour, which has for the space of ten years permeated all classes with your views, and eventually succeeded in winning the nation to your side.

The House of Commons has, either without a division or with overwhelming majorities, endorsed the demand which we learned from you to adopt and enforce. His Majesty's Government has repeatedly declared its acceptance of your contention that Old Age Pensions should be a civil right, universal, non-contributory, and free from all taint of the Poor Law.

In the sphere of principle our victory is complete, and we are proud to acknowledge that our victory is yours. You have supplied the ideas, the arguments, the convincing considerations which have conquered the nation.

The half-million aged persons who now draw free pensions from the State are the first of a great multitude whose

declining years will be made peaceful and honourable by your high-souled initiative, and whose increasing infirmities will be sweetened and hallowed by gratitude to Almighty God for what you have done.

(Signed),

GEO. N. BARNES, *Chairman.*
 GEO. D. KELLEY, *Vice-Chairman.*
 EDWARD CADBURY, *Treasurer.*
 FREDERICK ROGERS, *Secretary.*
 F. HERBERT STEAD, *Hon. Secretary.*
 R. WAITE, *Hon. Secretary.*
 THOS. BURT.
 GEORGE CADBURY.
 JOHN V. STEVENS.

November, 1909.

APPENDIX E

SUGGESTED TABLET

The hope I had expressed at my first meeting in Walworth after the Act had been passed may be repeated here. I stated that I should be glad were the means forthcoming to erect in Browning Hall a granite tablet, graven deep with the following inscription. Such an enduring memorial might, in the ages to come, be unearthed by some excavator endeavouring from the ruins of long-buried London to reconstruct some conception of the forces at work at the beginning of the twentieth century. And posterity would know that, despite the chatter of much contemporary literature about the decadence of religion in the twentieth century, the real dynamic movements of the time were initiated and propelled by the recognised activity of God :—

THIS TABLET IS ERECTED
IN GRATEFUL COMMEMORATION
OF THE JUSTICE AND GRACE OF
GOD

WHO, WHEN ALL PARTIES IN THE STATE HAD LEFT
UNHELPED AND UNHONOURED
THE AGED OF THIS REALM,
GRACIOUSLY CHOSE TO RAISE UP
IN THIS HALL,
AFTER EXPOSITION HERE ON NOVEMBER 20TH, 1898, OF THE
FIRST OLD AGE PENSIONS ACT
IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE, PASSED BY NEW ZEALAND:
BY MEANS OF THE CONFERENCE HELD HERE
DECEMBER 13TH, 1898, WITH
CHARLES BOOTH
IN ADVOCACY OF
PENSIONS FOR ALL IN OLD AGE:
AND BY MEANS OF THE
NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ORGANIZED LABOUR
WHICH RESULTED FROM ENSUING CONFERENCES WITH MR. BOOTH
IN NEWCASTLE, LEEDS, MANCHESTER, GLASGOW, BRISTOL,
AND BIRMINGHAM,
A NATIONAL MOVEMENT
WHICH, DIRECTED FROM THIS HALL, THE CHIEF OFFICERS BEING
GEORGE N. BARNES, FRANCIS HERBERT STEAD, EDWARD CADBURY,
FREDERICK ROGERS,
EVENTUALLY SECURED AS A FIRST INSTALMENT THE
OLD AGE PENSIONS ACT, 1908
THEREBY ANSWERING THE PRAYERS OF HIS PEOPLE
OFFERED HERE AND ELSEWHERE, 1898—1908.

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